JULY — 1947 — AUGUST

"Where there is no vision the people perish"

THE POETRY REVIEW

THE JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)
AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL
POETIC INTEREST

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Published Bi-monthly by
THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED), 33 Portman Square, London, W.1
American Editorial Office: 299 Park Avenue, New York
TWO SHILLINGS NET (Annual Postal Subscription, 9s. 6d.; U.S.A., 2.50 dollars)

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POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

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All communications regarding advertising should be addressed to the Advt. Manager, 30 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Printed in Great Britain by C. Nicholls & Company Ltd., London, Manchester and Reading, and Published by the Proprietors, The Poetry Society (Incorporated), at 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, England.

Edward Thomas

TRADITIONALLY poetry is regarded as the characteristic medium for the expression of youth. Schools and universities teem with mediocre verse-makers who imagine that in them lies the genius of a Keats or a Chatterton. In undeniable fact much of our literary inheritance has been penned by young men on the threshold of life—many of whom scarcely crossed the threshold; whether, if they had been spared, their genius would have blossomed forth to any greater growth has always been a matter for speculative interest.

But Edward Thomas does not fit into this category. He never wrote a line of poetry—or, as far as we know, ever wished to do so—until he had reached the age of thirty-five and had been weighed down by the cares of earning a precarious livelihood for himself, his wife and three children by a kind of pen-bondage. Although he had chosen for himself this way of living and for over ten years had lived as a journalistic hack—writing what he was told to write for whatever payment publishers chose to offer him—yet when, just after the outbreak of the first great war, he suddenly discovered his real medium of expression, he wrote because he had to and with no immediate thought of market-value. His poetry became a safety-valve which restored to him his peace of mind and ultimately earned for him a place among his contemporary war-poets.

Philip Edward Thomas was born in London on 3rd March, 1878, the eldest of six children of Welsh parents. His father was a civil servant working at the Board of Trade and, from Edward's descriptions, was a slave to black-coated respectability and conventions. Educated at five different schools, ranging between board schools and private schools and culminating in St. Paul's which Edward entered at the age of sixteen and where he was a contemporary of G. K. Chesterton and E. C. Bentley—he early developed a passionate love of the countryside and all the wonders of nature. While at school he kept a diary and supplemented it by descriptions of walks he had taken, written in a style imitative of Richard Jefferies, whose "Life" Thomas was to write many years later, and other naturalists.

As a boy, Edward's greatest joy was to spend a holiday at Swindon at Wiltshire where he stayed with his grandmother. It was on one of his holidays there that, while fishing in the canal, he met David Uzzell who became the greatest friend and comforter of that period of his life. Uzzell was an old, grey-haired, bearded and toothless patriarch who talked to the boy as to an equal and from whom the latter gained countless stores of natural history. Walking side by side with "Dad", as Uzzell was familiarly known, Edward explored the Wiltshire countryside; the simplicity and freedom of the life and speech of Uzzell came to the boy as a welcome breath of fresh air after the respectability and convention of Mr. Thomas's existence. Twenty years later Edward wrote of "Lob" in his own favourite of his poems:

> "Young Jack, or old Jack, or Jack what-d'ye-call,
> Jack in the hedge or Robin-run-by-the-wall,
> Robin Hood, Ragged Robin, lazy Bob . . .

the very rock on which England is built,

> "He has been in England as long as dove and daw,
> Calling the wild cherry tree the merry tree,
> The rose-campion Bridget in-her-bravery."

And the form which was taken by this typical Englishman whose very soul was the soul of England was, to Thomas, the well-loved and well-remembered form of David Uzzell: "An old man's face, by life and weather cut

And coloured, rough, brown, sweet as any nut,
A land-face, sea-blue-eyed . . . "

In direct contrast to the carefree days at Swindon spent in congenial company was Edward's life at home. He could neither understand his father nor his father he; their characters were completely alien to one another. In religion, Mr. Thomas was a non-conformist and a "Positivist" and allied himself strictly to the rather austere Welsh black-coated Sabbath. During his schooldays Edward developed a hatred and fear of Sunday which he was to carry with him throughout life. Mr. Thomas was in the habit of sending his children to chapel alone on such Sundays as he was unable or disinclined to go himself. On these occasions the children were exposed at Sunday dinner to a cross-examination upon the sermon. On Edward, as the eldest of the family of boys, fell most of the onus of this discussion and his father's deadly seriousness, complete lack of humour and merciless misunderstanding of his eldest son combined to make Sunday seem to him "a cruel ceremonious punishment for the freedom of Monday".

Of the fact that Edward was undoubtedly clever and that his literary efforts were praised by his schoolmasters Mr. Thomas was duly proud, and attempted to help his son with his homework. But to the stern Welsh radical and positivist, poetry and the lierature of the countryside, which Edward loved so dearly, were completely inexplicable. Having "bettered himself" considerably, Mr. Thomas was very proud and ambitious for his eldest son; he saw in his mind's eye Edward progressing up the scale in the Civil Service and, in order that his son might make good and have the best schooling possible, there is little doubt that Mr. and Mrs. Thomas made many sacrifices. But to Edward—the lover of the countryside and its literature—the prospect of a "safe" job at a desk was anathema. Although at Easter 1895 he left school to read for a Civil Service examination, he never wavered in his ambition—to write. Neither father nor son would concede to the other's wishes. Edward had already had essays accepted and paid for by *The Globe, The Academy,* and *The New Age.* But to his father the idea of giving up the prospect of safety and respectability in favour of a life of perhaps great hardship and insecurity was incomprehensible.

In the summer of 1894 Edward had been befriended by James Ashcroft Noble, the literary critic and reviewer, who was considerably impressed by Edward's essays. For the next few months young Thomas spent much time at the Noble's house in Wandsworth and a friendship rapidly sprang up between Edward and Noble's second daughter, Helen; they took long walks together and as these became more frequent Mrs. Noble became resentful of Edward's visits.

The Thomases knew nothing of this attachment until under an impulse Helen one day went alone to their house and introduced herself to Edward's mother, to the great anger of her own mother. Helen soon visited the house regularly and got on quite well with Edward's parents. In the spring of 1896 Helen's father died and soon afterwards Thomas dedicated to Noble's memory *The Woodland Life* which was accepted by Blackwood's.

Helen, after the death of her father, found her mother's antagonism to Edward so great that she took a post away from home as a nursery governess. It was while she was there that she and Edward began to write to each other every day and she herself has told the story of the next few months in *As it was.*

By this time Edward had been allowed to study for a history scholarship to Oxford in place of the Civil Service examination.

In September Edward took Helen up to Swindon to show her his beloved Wiltshire and they spent a few wonderfully happy days together in David Uzzell's

cottage where the old couple welcomed them as their own children. Those few days were to be the most completely happy ones of their life together; they were still little more than children and not yet had that daemon of Edward's—his melancholy spirit—taken hold on him to spoil their carefree love.

When Edward went up to Oxford soon afterwards he did not at once settle down among his fellows. In some ways many years older and in other ways many years younger than his contemporaries, he had no close friends at this time and it was this loneliness which first encouraged his introversion and melancholy. His writing had undergone a change since the publication of *The Woodland Life*—his style had become affected and pedantic, flowery and stilted, under the influence of Walter Pater. This development in his style was abundantly apparent in the "tortuous skeletonizings" of himself in his letters to Harry Hooton, who had married a friend of Helen's and with whom had developed a firm friendship.

Thomas, who had matriculated as a non-collegiate student, failed to get the Balliol scholarship for which he tried but in March 1898 was successful in gaining one to Lincoln College. At college he began to make friends and discovered the delights of the Oxfordshire countryside. He spent his allowance extravagantly—mainly on books—"My only physical craving", he said, "is for books and still more books". It was as well that he could make hay while the sun shone for fate was not to allow him much longer in which to indulge this craving; she was even to force him to take down his previous books from their positions of honour on his shelves before many years were out in order to provide food and clothing to keep his—and Helen's—bodies and souls together.

In the summer Edward was upset by a row between Helen and her employer who had discovered her relationship with Edward; although she herself secured a post in another, mildly "Bohemian" family where she was happy, Edward brooded over the situation for a long time. Having sought to drown his morbid melancholy in rowdiness, he returned home at Christmas in a happier frame of mind, encouraged by the fact that he liked Helen's new employers and saw Helen very often.

When he returned to Oxford, Thomas was able to meet many of his intellectual equals—among them E. S. P. Haynes and J. H. Morgan—and together with these and his old friend Ian MacAlister he settled down to argue, to plan, to discuss and to write. He was outgrowing the artificialities of the Pater phase which he had just gone through. He could now "look in his heart and write" and produce a simple, unadorned piece of prose in the place of the stilted and pedantic floweret.

The cares and troubles of life were about to break over the head of the quiet, literary-minded undergraduate for in the summer term of 1899 Helen wrote to tell him she was pregnant. They were married quietly on 20th June at Fulham Registry Office and returned after the ceremony—Edward to Oxford and Helen to her job. Some months later Helen went to live with Edward's parents and remained with them until their son, Mervyn, was born in the following January. Edward, whose father had let him return to Oxford for a year on sufferance, could not settle to work, his nerves were upset, and he achieved only a second-class degree. Mr. Thomas was both bitterly disappointed and irate; he demanded that for the sake of his wife and child Edward should now take that "safe" job in the Civil Service and when Edward refused, Mr. Thomas told his son to leave the house.

Then began the miserable pilgrimage from flat to flat, from cottage to cottage, with at each move the hopes and prayers in the hearts of both Edward and Helen that their luck would change: that they were beginning again. The little family

set up house in three rooms in Atheldene Road, Earlsfield; the surroundings were anything but prepossessing and both of them knew that Edward's chances of earning enough to keep them in security were not exactly rosy. And yet, with his nerves tired and overwrought and his eyes wide open to the hardships that were bound to confront him, Edward embarked on the career of a literary hack—a bond-slave where he might have been a free agent.

To the sensitive and reticent Thomas, the daily round of Fleet Street offices seeking for work was an ordeal. Many of the editors on whom he called had their own staffs and it was extremely unlikely that any of them should welcome with outstretched arms the work of an unknown and untried young man simply because he thought he had a flair for writing. H. W. Nevinson, the literary editor of *The Chronicle,* alone of all whom he visited, was kindly disposed to him. Nevinson describes their first interview thus : "One evening after my first return from the Boer war, a person of unknown name was announced, as many such there were, and, cursing aloud or silently, I awaited his entrance. Can a man stride with a proud and melancholy shyness? If so, he strode in that manner. He was tall, absurdly thin, and a face of attractive distinction and ultra-refinement was sicklied over with nervous melancholy and the ill-condition of bad food or hunger. Almost too shy to speak, he sat down proudly and asked if I could give him work. I enquired what work he could do, and he said "None". . . Of course, he at once became one of my very best reviewers, and soon one of my closest friends. Shy and reserved of feeling he always remained; too self-distrustful till nearly the end."

Thomas became a regular reviewer for *The Chronicle* and soon other papers also gave him work while he sold articles to various magazines both in this country and America. Reviewing, however, he found an exhausting and thankless task; it was ill-paid and, as he never allowed himself to write thoughtlessly or carelessly or to read other than meticulously, he became caught up in a vicious circle out of which there seemed no way of escape. To write as he wanted to write—articles and essays —meant time snatched from the less-well-paid reviewing. But, if he indulged himself in doing so, then he had to review twice as much in half the time in order to get any ready cash while he found a market for his other writings. The whole situation was a whirlpool in the eddies of which Edward, Helen and their children were to be sucked down and thrown out again until Edward found a certain peace and security in the uniform of a soldier for a little while before he was to gain everlasting peace and security. Although at this time they were being helped by Edward's parents and Helen proved an excellent manager, yet before very long Edward was forced to part with some of his beloved books—those lovely editions of the poets which he had bought while at Oxford—all had to be turned into shillings and pence in order to feed and clothe the family.

In February 1901 a move was made—to number 7, Nightingale Parade, Nightingale Lane, Balham: a more comfortable four-roomed house where Edward and Helen tried to believe that life would smile on them and money would fall into their laps. Edward actually became an unpaid probationer of a Charity Organisation Society—where, if his work was satisfactory, he would later be offered a permanent post at a salary of £100 rising to £150 a year. A week's work at their offices was enough for Edward and as he was not offered a permanency he soon fell back on his own resources. He turned down a mastership at a prep. school at the salary of £100 a year and attempts to get posts as sub-editors or librarians were all unavailing and, sick of London, Edward started out in September to look for a country cottage in Kent.

Rose Acre Cottage near Bearsted was not exactly the dream cottage. It was ugly and cheap-looking, there were no roses and Helen "nearly cried when she saw it". Edward was a little more successful in his literary work and he and Helen were happy in the country and in their delight in their child. Although, in the spring of 1902, a collection of essays called "Horae Solitariae" was published by Duckworth, the demand for his work was diminishing and the reviews and articles for which he was receiving a few shillings were costing him days and nights of work. John Moore in his *Life and letters of Edward Thomas* writes: "Honesty is not always the best policy; and it was certainly not good policy to spend "ten days and nights" in reviewing a new edition of John Lyly—for which labour he ultimately received twenty-six shillings! And it was honest, but unwise, to waste several hours looking up facts for an encyclopaedia article for which the fee would be half a guinea. If Edward was going to do this sort of work at all, he should have contrived to do it in a slipshod and superficial way; he was paid for no more than that. But he was a man who, however hard he tried, could never be slipshod or superficial." Edward's melancholy seemed to envelop him, more especially as he discovered that, while the essays which he had written as a boy were accepted as soon as he sent them off, yet no publisher wanted to take the work he was doing at that time. Throughout the rest of his life this melancholy, these fits of brooding despair, were something against which he—and Helen—had to fight. Fostered by the precariousness of his work and the cares and worries of providing for his family, the shadow of them was ever hovering over him—only to leave him for brief periods. Helen, in *World without End*, tells the story of one of those days when Edward "was wrestling with his demon of melancholy": "as was his way when like this he had been going long walks, getting from the solitary places and the sky and the hills the spiritual comfort that he could get from no other source, but often wearing out his body with hunger and fatigue, so that he came home as on this morning haggard and weary and silent. I took my way to the village heavy at heart, and at the post office there were no letters. This filled me with dread and dismay . . . I put Philip (Mervyn) to bed before going to the study where I found David (Edward) sitting as I had left him, not reading, not smoking with his head in his hands, staring with eyes that saw nothing. 'There are no letters'. 'Why tell me what is written on your pale wretched face? I am cursed, and you are cursed because of me. I hate the tears I see you've been crying. Your sympathy and your love are both hateful to me . . . get out and leave me'." And yet there were days —isolated ones—when Edward was supremely happy, loving and being loved by Helen and Mervyn.

Through Helen's father who had encouraged Edward's writing, he first began a correspondence with Gordon Bottomley which was to flourish throughout his life. Bottomley was then a young poet who had sent some of his verses to Noble for criticism and who, having become friendly with Noble's wife and daughters, still kept in touch with Helen after her father's death and her own marriage. Edward plucked up courage to enclose a letter of his own in one of Helen's: ". . . Nearly seven years ago I glanced at a manuscript of yours in Mr. Noble's house, and now I wish that I had written to you straightway. For I have been staring at this paper half an hour, trying to get a take-off to Well Knowe House . . . seven years ago I could have made the leap with the same confidence as the idiot who dropped a letter 'to heaven' into a scarlet pillar-box . . . perhaps you will some day write a letter specially to me." . . .

Although Thomas and Bottomley were not to meet until May, 1903, they became fast friends through their letters which they exchanged regularly from this

time onwards. Their letters were mainly concerned with books and poetry; and Edward's were noticeably happier and less introspective than most of his letters written at this time, probably because he did not care to confess himself wholly to one who was still a stranger—although soon the stranger became one of his greatest friends.

Undoubtedly Thomas was fighting against great odds: ever since he had left Oxford at the age of twenty-two he had been faced with the task of earning a living not only for himself but for three persons, and having forsworn a 'safe' job he had had to take the first work that came along—and continue to do so, whatever the remuneration. There is little wonder, in the circumstances, that he became a victim of neurasthenia and, later, also developed diabetic trouble. Norman Douglas and Gordon Bottomley have both expressed the opinion that Thomas would probably have been most well-suited in the life of a bachelor don—he himself always hankered vaguely after 'something in a library'.

Soon after his daughter Bronwen was born, Thomas's luck seemed to turn—he was engaged on the preparation of a new edition of John Dyer's poems for "The Welsh Library" for his late history tutor, Owen Edwards. But when that work was finished and no more commissions given him, Thomas went to London to look for work. Helen writes: "He had been away some weeks, when one evening . . . a telegram was brought to me. I read 'Commission for book on Oxford £100. Returning tomorrow! I read it over and over again: a hundred pounds was a fortune for us. What a congenial subject, too, what encouragement for him! . . . I was so excited that I felt I must tell someone. So without waiting to put on a hat I ran over to the Crossmans . . ." Mr. Crossman was an old wine-merchant and he and his wife rejoiced with Helen over Edward's good fortune. By the contract, this book must be written and delivered to the publishers by June 30th (and the contract was signed in February) and must consist of not less than sixty thousand words, at the rate of pay of £1 11s. 4d. a thousand. Edward would normally have enjoyed writing this book, the subject was one that was dear to him, but he had to write against time—as in all his work—and still continue with the bread-and-butter reviewing. In spite of all these handicaps, the book he produced was well-written and he even discovered that in his earnest zeal to fulfil his contract he had written some thousands more words than stipulated! With financial worries in the background for the time being, the Thomases left Rose Acre for an attractive country cottage in the village. But in spite of all their hopes, Edward's nerves and melancholy did not improve, and the cottage proved itself singularly ill-proofed against the rain, and damp and wind, and the drains gave trouble and the baby nearly died from pneumonia. The periods of comfort and freedom from fear of debt were always transitory and from time to time he was forced to sacrifice his books for the sake of a few shillings.

Then, in May 1904, they moved to a farmhouse in the Weald of Kent, and Edward again had some commissioned work—a book on "Beautiful Wales", he was getting enough reviewing to keep them, and his second volume of essays—called "Rose Acre Papers" and dedicated to Gordon Bottomley—was published in the autumn.

It was a kind of nightmare to him whenever he had to write under contract that he would not be able to stand up to the strain but would give way to exhaustion—mental and physical—before the book was finished. While working on the book about Wales he wrote to Bottomley: ". . . only a revolution or a catastrophe or an improbable development can ever make calm or happiness possible for me. Still, you need not be afraid of an abrupt fifth act, because I am too distracted and

undetermined ever to do more than be perplexed in the extreme and in vain."

As he had more work to do and more money coming in now than he perhaps ever had, Thomas now rented a cottage in nearby Egg Pie Lane where he went to do his writing every day. He also went up to London once a fortnight when he met some of his intellectual equals, including W. H. Davies, who became one of his friends and who later lived in the cottage in Egg Pie Lane and there wrote part of his autobiography. He enjoyed these regular meetings but when he went to a dinner given by "The Academy" he hated the artificiality and formality. Walter de la Mare has described his first meeting with Thomas thus: "We met for the first time—one still, blue, darkening summer evening in a place curiously uncharacteristic of him, one of the back streets of the City of London, to him far rather the astonishing 'wen' than the hub of God's universe. The streets were already deserted. I was first at the tryst, and presently out of a neighbouring court echoed that peculiarly leisurely footfall, and his figure appeared in the twilight. "Gulliver himself could hardly have looked a stranger phenomenon in Lilliput than he appeared in Real-Turtle-Soup-land—his clothes, his gait, his face, his bearing. . . . I have never heard English used so fastidiously and yet so unaffectedly as in his talk. *Style* in talk, indeed, is a rare charm, and it was his . . ."

But the period of prosperity did not last long and soon Thomas was again looking for work. Then he was offered and accepted three commissions at once: the compilation of an Anthology of Songs for the Open Air, the editorship of a popular Natural History and a share in a series of articles on hallucinations. The first of these appealed to him very much but all were very poorly paid and entailed a great deal of work.

In December, 1906, the problem of Mervyn's schooling had resulted in a move to Ashford near Petersfield so that the boy could go to Bedales. Then he agreed to write a book on the "Heart of England", and for the next four years was writing an amazing variety of books at a terrific strain to himself and with the inevitable spasms of exhaustion and melancholy. The products of these years (1907-1911) included "The South Country", "Windsor Castle", "The Isle of Wight", "Feminine Influence on the Poets", Lives of Borrow, Jefferies and Maeterlinck and a volume of essays entitled "Rest and Unrest".

Moore attributes the following incident to the period while Thomas was engaged on the life of Jefferies. In "World without End", however, it takes place during his work on "Swinburne" which, in Helen Thomas's estimation, though not in Moore's, antedates "Jefferies". At all events, while Thomas was writing one of his books, he went to Minsmere in Suffolk and there he met a young girl of seventeen with whom he fell half in love. Helen has written of the descriptions of these meetings which were contained in Edward's letters to her: "He said she was like a wild, timid sea-bird, and that only very gradually he had overcome her shyness. He lent her books and introduced her to poetry. He told her of me whom she had known as Auntie Jenny, and of the children." (Helen had stayed with her family at Margate.) "Then I got a letter from her which showed me that she was unconsciously falling in love with David, and I felt very much troubled about her. . . . His beautiful face, lovely voice and sympathetic interest had thrilled her. . . . I wrote to David (Edward) telling him to be very careful with this sensitive girl. . . . David did not heed my advice, but was amused and pleased with my attitude to the affair." However the whole affair came to a sudden end when the girl confided in her elder sister who let her parents into the secret, much to their anger.

In August, 1908, Thomas secured a part-time job as Assistant Secretary to the Royal Commission on Welsh Monuments, but the work proved only to be clerical

and not as interesting as he had expected, and he resigned the following Christmas. About this time he produced some of his essays which were written not for immediate sale but for the love of that kind of work: these were later published in "Rest and Unrest" and "Light and Twilight".

When the land on which their cottage was built was sold and the cottage was required as a gardener's lodge, the Thomases were faced with another move—this time to a house, nearby, built especially for them by Geoffrey Lupton, a friend of theirs. For some months Helen supplemented the family exchequer by teaching at Bedales and also by taking some of the children as paying guests but both sources of income ceased before the birth of their second little girl in August, 1910.

During the next year or two Thomas was again working at commissioned books: "Celtic Tales" and "Norse Tales", a book on Lafcadio Hearn and "The Icknield Way", but he had lost a great deal of his reviewing and was becoming increasingly despondent and a victim of neurasthenia: so much so, in fact, that Helen began to fear for his reason and even suicide. In "World Without End" she has written: "The children avoid him as much as possible and are afraid to talk at meals. He knows it, and it is fresh torture to his tortured spirit. He tries to make them say they hate him, and they cry and will not. A black gloom is over the house. I dread his going to the study; I dread his coming back. I feel my face stiffen into deep lines. I am possessed with fear. He speaks little, but what he says is said to hurt me and doubly hurt himself. I keep myself hard at work, for if I stopped I should become physically incapable, as spiritually I am paralysed. I should just sit and brood. My soul is in the dark and loneliness and agony with him, but my body has to work, my tongue to make conversation with the children. I drag through it all as if I were weighted with chains." Only spasmodically was his state of mental and physical health improved by walking-tours or other holidays. Perhaps if he had been able to tear himself right away from money troubles and the necessity of working at high pressure his condition might have improved but as it was he had no chance; he was still pouring out commissioned books—"Walter Pater", a study of his old Oxford-days model, "Swinburne", and "The Country" for Batsford. He wrote books for almost every publisher in London and reviews for all the 'literary' papers. Norman Douglas has written that he "talked books and wrote of books, and of books about books, till the lyrical core of his mind was submerged, imprisoned, encysted in an impenetrable capsule."

In August, 1911, Clifford Bax invited Thomas to join his annual cricket tour and although he was not a cricketer he enjoyed the tour and the company of the other writers in the team: Herbert Farjeon, Stacy Aumonier, Arthur Ransome, and the two Bax brothers, Clifford and Arnold who wrote under the pseudonym of Dermot o'Byrne. Herbert Farjeon and Clifford Bax wrote a parody on Masefield's "Widow in the Bye-street" to commemorate the tour and its hero was "Walking Tom", obviously Thomas:

"Tom was a scrivener, just turned thirty-five,
Who used to toss off columns for the papers
Trying to save his shrivelled soul alive,
A mark of awe to all the village gapers
Of Wick-cum-Steep, his little Hampshire eyrie.
It was in Wick-cum-Steep he wrote his diary."

But when Thomas returned home he again began writing and by the beginning of 1913 he was dreadfully worried about his prospects. He wrote to Edward Garnett: "Please tell me of some monarch, poet, prostitute or hero that I can write a book about." Moore says "He toyed with the idea of taking a small village

shop: he thought of lecturing, but decided he could never face an audience", and wrote to his friends begging them to find him some kind of office job or "something in a library".

In a mood of restlessness he started—and never finished—an autobiographical story, "The Happy-go-lucky-Morgans"; but his livelihood was becoming very precarious: "His study by now was half full of free copies and remainders of his own books; and still he went on writing books because he must. He tore some up and made them into kite-tails for the Bedales children, and grimly watched them sailing across the sky". Having made a bicycle tour from London to the Quantocks to curb his restlessness he came back and wrote an account of it in "A Pursuit of Spring". Then—in an attempt to leave troubles behind—they moved again, to a cheap workman's cottage in the village of Steep.

Thomas never made real friends easily and when, in this period, he met Eleanor Farjeon, their friendship and companionship did him much good. He was commissioned to write a book on Keats, and began his autobiography up to the age of sixteen which he never expected to publish but which became a mental exercise.

In 1913 Thomas first met Robert Frost, the American poet, whose first book, "A Boy's Will", Thomas reviewed in "The New Weekly". It was under Frost's influence that Thomas's own poetry was written a few years later. After he had finished his new book, "A Literary Pilgrim in England", he planned to go to America with Frost but before his plans were really formed the war intervened.

The immediate effect of the war on Thomas was to create worry over the future of the book-trade and so of his livelihood. But he was on holiday in August, 1914, and did not face the problem seriously until September. In his anxiety he determined to turn reporter and travelled up and down the country, later writing "Tipperary", "It's a long, long way", and "England", which articles were after his death collected and republished in "The Last Sheaf". In a half-nonchalant, half-diffident frame of mind, Thomas's first poetry was written in these first months of the war. He was seriously thinking of joining the army, although

"Beside my hate for one fat patriot
My hatred for the Kaiser is love true:
A kind of god he is, banging a gong.
But I have not to choose between the two,
Or between justice and injustice . . .
But with the best and meanest Englishman
I am one in crying, God save England, lest
We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed.
The ages made her that made us from dust:
She is all we know and live by, and we trust
She is good and must endure, loving her so:
And as we love ourselves we hate her foe."

To Edward Thomas nature and the out-of-doors were his god; as a walker he was passionately fond of the roads of England and he knew many of them well; his patriotism sprang from his love of and familiarity with the English countryside and his fear that it might be desecrated. One of his poems was entitled "Roads":

"I love roads:
The goddesses that dwell
Far along invisible
Are my favourite gods.

Roads go on

While we forget, and are
Forgotten like a star
That shoots and is gone. . . .

The next turn may reveal
Heaven: upon the crest
The close pine clump, at rest
And black, may Hell conceal . . .

Now all roads lead to France
And heavy is the tread
Of the living; but the dead
Returning lightly dance: . . ."

When Thomas had almost decided to volunteer, an accident forced him to remain in the house for a short time and during that period he compiled an anthology called "This England" for the Oxford University Press. He sought to avoid the blatant patriotism of the Union Jack but "I want", he told a friend, "anything that makes us *feel* England"—*e.g.*, Hotspur's ridicule of Glendower (and all Celts), (and yet Thomas himself was Welsh!), "George Herbert's hymn, 'The British Church'."

Thomas was very sensitive to criticism of his own poems and decided he would publish them under a pseudonym—Edward Eastaway—and he sent them out from Eleanor Farjeon's, not his own, address. Many were rejected—and often.

As his sprained ankle was obstinately slow in recovering, Thomas began and finished another book, on the Duke of Marlborough. But on the 15th July, 1915, when he was in London, as Helen thought looking for work, he telegraphed to her that he had enlisted in the Artists' Rifles. While undergoing rigorous training and being regimented in a manner which was very different from his usual mode of life, Thomas went on writing poetry. The four poems which he sent home for Helen and the three children were written while he was thoroughly enjoying his training in map-reading and map-making:

"If I should ever by chance grow rich
I'll buy Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,
And let them all to my elder daughter . . .

What shall I give to my daughter the younger
More than will keep her from cold and hunger?
I shall not give her anything . . .
But leave her Steep and her own world
And her spectacled self with hair uncurled."

So run the poems for his daughters, Helen's and Mervyn's follow in the same vein.

At the end of November, 1916, Thomas obtained a commission and volunteered for France. Shortly before going to France, Thomas spent three days of his leave at Silverdale, Carnforth, with Gordon Bottomley, who wrote of that visit: "I have no written record of that time, but the memory is still vivid and new. There was talk and music, and he sang (he always sang when he came to us) . . . he went one or two long walks with my wife; at other time he sat with me in my open garden-house. One afternoon we spent a long time indoors watching a marvellous storm gather about Ill Bell and High Street and come sweeping down Kentmere and the estuary: the cross-lights among the dark veils were unearthly. He said,

reflectively, "You *are* lucky." I replied, "What, with my health?" He was silent for an appreciable time, then said still more quietly, "Yes" . . . Thomas must have loved the glorious dignity and massive solemnity of those northern lakes and fells. The less-publicized beauty-spots such as Silverdale must have won his heart, and indeed soon after this visit he sent Bottomley a poem entitled "The Sheiling" (which is the name of the latter's house at Silverdale):

"It stands alone
Up in a land of stone
All worn like ancient stairs,
A land of rocks and trees
Nourished on wind and stone.

And all within
Long delicate has been;
By arts and kindlyness
Coloured, sweetened, and warmed
For many years has been . . ."

The months which were spent in uniform in England including as they did ecstatic leaves when all the family made merry were probably the happiest Thomas had ever experienced since the long-ago week-end with Helen at David Uzzell's cottage. He seemed to have thrown off his gloom and cares. Thomas had been in France less than three months when he was killed near Arras on Easter Sunday, 1917.

Although he had been writing poetry for only two and a half years, he left in all one hundred and forty poems, some of which were published during his lifetime: "Six Poems by Edward Eastaway, 1916"; "Poems" by Edward Thomas, 1917; "Last Poems, 1918"; "Hay-making" and "The Manor Farm" appeared anonymously in his anthology "This England"; "Annual of New Poetry, 1917" included eighteen of Edward Eastaway's poems, and finally most of them appeared in "Collected Poems, 1920" with the remainder added in 1928 and subsequent editions.

There is in his work none of the immaturity of the experimenter and novice; after all, although he had not himself used the medium before, he knew a great deal about poetry; he had handled the works of all his contemporaries and written expositions of many of the traditional English poets. Because he knew so much about verse-forms and he had not begun to write in verse until he knew in himself he could do it and do it well, he was sensitive about it; if it had been written as the majority of his prose had been—against time, sometimes against inclination—then he would have been the first to criticise his own work, and would have gladly submitted to comment from others.

Although the background to his writing was often an army hut or trench, yet very little of his poetry actually takes war or war incidents as its subject. His poetry is nature poetry, taking simplicity, wonder and longing as its key-notes. But it is most definitely *English* nature-poetry; poetry of the English countryside; the apotheosis of all he was seeking for when compiling "This England". In "The Manor Farm", for instance, he writes,

". . . The Winter's cheek flushed as if he had drained
Spring, Summer, and Autumn at a draught
And smiled quietly. But 'twas not Winter—
Rather a season of bliss unchangeable
Awakened from farm and church where it had lain

Safe under tile and thatch for ages since
This England, Old already, was called Merry."

The England of "Lob" was the England Thomas knew and loved and perhaps it was because he knew it so well and loved it so intensely that he sought to give his 'feel' for England permanent form lest that England itself might soon be a thing of the past. He lifted up his voice to cry

"The last light has gone out of the world, except
This moonlight lying on the grass like frost
Beyond the brink of the tall elm's shadow.
It is as if everything else had slept
Many an age, unforgotten and lost—
The men that were, the things done, long ago,
All I have thought; and but the moon and I
Live yet and here stand idle over a grave
Where all is buried. Both have liberty
To dream what we could do if we were free
To do some thing we had desired long,
The moon and I. . . ."

By the ordinations of fate, the lover of England was not spared to see his fears removed: to see his words of comfort to Helen become fulfilled in more than their own lives: "All's Well".

ATHALIE BUSHNELL.

Gale in Spring

THE gale hustles like an old lady,
Furiously pursuing her fellow tenants
Who leased this landscape for the Winter,
Before the new brushes began to re-decorate
With green leaves and the yellow daffodil.

Over the fresh-turned earth she hurries now,
Ruffling with a rude indifference the feathers
Of the new-clad larches along the Pilgrims' Road
To achieve a shrill crescendo in the Sound.

No false courtesy offers the uninvited guest
Fresh hospitality for the season,
In fact the peatfire smoke follows
Her to the island threshold,
There to make a determined farewell.

While out beyond The Dutchman's Cap
The waters wait, the white waves
Seethe and swirl in a restless swell,
And the broad Atlantic prepares a grave.

Jesus College, Oxford, and Durban, South Africa. *Roy Macnab.*

John Donne and the Spiritual Life

"The first impression of an unbiased reader who dips into the poems of John Donne is unfavourable. He is repulsed by the intolerably harsh and crabbed versification, by the recondite choice of theme and expression, and by the oddity of the thought. In time, however, he perceives that behind the fantastic garb of language there is an earnest and vigorous mind, an imagination that harbours fire within its cloudy folds, and an insight into the mysteries of spiritual life which is often startling".

Thus the Encyclopaedia Britannica on John Donne, and I myself believe the description to be fair enough. Certainly the versification is often "harsh and crabbed". Donne is the only high-ranking poet I know, in our language, who has seen fit to divide a word in half at the end of a line, thus

> "So doth, so in Religion; and this blind-
> nesse too much light breeds" (ls. 68-69; Satyre III);

and "As prone to all ill, and of good as forget-
full, as proud, as lustful, and as much in debt"(ls. 13-14; Satyre IV).

He is continually forcing one on from line to line in this manner.

What can the Epigram on Pyramus and Thisbe be called but awkward expression? "Two, by themselves, each other, love and feare,
Slaine, cruell friends, by parting have joyn'd here."

This seems bad to me, as poetry or as anything else.

What can be more fantastically garbed than the extravagant language of his Anniversaries, which Ben Johnson (for once with justice) condemned, and which Donne threatened to repeat yearly, but thankfully gave up after the second. For recondite allusions, look to his "Heroical Epistles". All this may be what made Aldous Huxley call Donne only a satirist.

As regards the so-called oddity of his thought, I must put in my first plea for Donne versus the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The oddity of the thought would, in the eyes of the Encyclopaedia no doubt, centre round Donne's insistence on the matters of fleshly corruption, his comparison of all that is most beautiful physically with all that is most loathly. I will later try to show why Donne insisted on corruption, and how it accorded with his spiritual values. Here I will simply remark in passing the close similarity of Donne's poem, "The Comparison", with Baudelaire's "La Charogne" or, better, "Les Métamorphoses d'une Vampire". The same two sides of "nature" are juxtaposed. I sense the same likeness between Donne's "On Black Hair and Eyes" and Baudelaire's "Les Promesses d'un Visage". Both of these erotic poems border on an obscene reading, as does l. 69 of "Love's Progresse".

I will not press the comparison further between the two poets at this stage, but it does supply proof for me of my belief—namely that Donne's eroticism was essentially in good taste, as I feel it to be, that it was no vulgarity, no oddity. Baudelaire—the poet who, above all, is known and read for his studied purity and decorous thought—constantly apposed, as Donne did, these two sides of the cosmos.

Behind all this, states the Encyclopaedia, is, first, "an earnest and vigorous mind, an imagination. . . ." I will not dwell overlong on these sides of Donne's poetic character. They are too well known. His fervour and the energy of his verse needs little quoting.

The poet who begins a poem "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love" ("The Canonization) or "Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with teares"

("Twicknam Garden") or "Spit in my face, you Jews, and pierce my sides" ("Divine Poems") or "Batter my heart, three person'd God" ("Divine Poems"): who talks of "silly old moralitie" (l. 5 "The Bracelet")—such a poet clearly owes something to Marlowe. (Yet, in every other way, of course, Donne was a poet who broke away from established tradition, as did Baudelaire—in his case by the very purity of his style. The above are only examples of rhetorical vigour which seem to me to be of a type found in Marlowe. Nor must it be forgotten that "Come live with mee and be my love" is a line indirectly—through Shakespeare—taken by Donne from Marlowe).

As for imagination, and for the sheer perfume of poetry, it is only necessary for the reader to go to the famous Songs and Sonnets.

I will now come on to consider what is the main theme of this essay, Donne's "insight into the mysteries of spiritual life", which was his chief contribution to literature. I am not concerned here with whether or not he could have made this contribution, the contribution of his poetry that is, better in prose than in verse. In passing, I would remark that it is this spirituality in Donne's work that has caused the name of "metaphysical" to be called down on him. I doubt if Donne would have considered metaphysical writing, if there is such a thing, as anything but the *ultima thule* of poetry. I cannot see that Donne propounded any metaphysic. He simply went from the seen, visible side of life to the unseen "mystery of things". He saw face to face, whereas we see through a glass darkly. Donne might be called an ontologist, but not a metaphysicist.

What were the spiritual values which Donne gives to us through the medium of his poetry? I will try to give some of them, as they appear to me. Firstly, I consider that Donne, in common with all great thinkers, was concerned with the body. He wanted to understand why we wear this "cumbrous frame of flesh", and what our duty to it was. He saw, with Baudelaire, but against Milton, the debt owed by man to the body. In his Essay "That The Gifts of The Body are better than Those of The Mind", and elsewhere in his prose writings, Donne puts the now familiar view that it is through our bodies that things filter to our intuitive minds, that our bodies are our minds' prisms in fact.

In "The Extasie" (ls. 49-52) he writes,

> "But O alas, so long, so farre
> Our bodies why doe wee forbeare?
> They are ours, though they are not wee, Wee are
> The intelligences, they the spheare."

and in "The Blossom" (l. 40), "As glad to have my body, as my minde."

So Donne saw nothing intrinsically evil in the body, in bodily passion, as Milton did. He saw no slavery to the body, and therefore naturally no necessity for mortification. He wanted all his senses open, so that he could drink in everything, every new experience, in order to be enabled to reach the divine ground more easily. With Baudelaire, I feel Donne wished to forgo no sensation in life.

At the same time as praising the flesh, as it were, Donne realised the refining influence of suffering on man. He did not wish to take suffering to his bosom, as Rousseau did, but he nevertheless acknowledged its power.

In "Divine Poems" he writes, "Those are my best days, when I shake with feare" (XIX. l. 14) and "No Crosse is so extreame, as to have none" ("The Cross" l. 14) and "No to be Martyrs, is a martyrdome" ("The Martyrs" l. 90).

He knew that "paine is true" ("The Dreame" l. 15) as did Shakespeare who wrote an almost identical sentence, "For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain" (Gaunt in "Richard II"). That is the interpretation I give, then,

to Donne's view of bodily suffering. For him it was a microscopic clarifying things, and we know that he had experience enough of it in his own life.

Guarding his bodily sensations, and appreciating the value of suffering, Donne saw one other facet of the human comedy with especial clearness—I mean, change. Change was not for him the ghastly spectre of mutability that had spelt "sad Time" for Spencer. Rather it was one other aspect of our mortal existence that, like suffering, Donne recognised as an attitude of the cosmos by which reality was attained.

In "Change" (ls. 35-36) he wrote,

> "Change is the nursery
> Of musicke, joy, life and eternity",

and in "Variety" (ls. 1-9), he clearly stated his views,

> "The heavens rejoyce in motion, why should I
> Abjure my so much lov'd variety,
> And not with many youth and love divide?
> Pleasure is none, if not diversifi'd:
> The sun that sitting in the chaire of light
> Sheds flame into what else so ever doth seem bright,
> Is not contented at sone Signe to Inne,
> But ends his year and with a new beginnes.
> All things doe willingly in change delight,
> The fruitfull mother of our appetite":

Then, in "The Second Anniversarie" (l. 22), we read "For there is motion in corruption".

This brings us on to Donne's concern with fleshly corruption, one of the best known themes in his work, and one often considered macabre, grotesque. The figure of the ageing neurotic who got himself up in a winding-sheet, with a funeral urn at his feet, to be sculpted by Nicholas Stone, is called up. Personally I see nothing morbid in Donne's attachment to the ugliness of physical life. It was for him a phase in time—the seamy side of life which later led to the dreamy. We have it richly in Baudelaire.

But it was this mental pose that affected his whole outlook on mortal life, and thus his insight into immortal life. Flesh was a mask for Donne—nothing of which one need be ashamed, rather the reverse, something to indulge (at least as to the gratification of the senses), to decorate, so that all the senses could be fulfilled and the eternal ground more easily recovered. Nothing must be missed. For that way lay a deadening of perception, an atrophying of sensibility and faculty, that might eventually obscure eternal things.

Thus to Donne (as to all such thinkers) art embellishes nature. "All, all that *Nature* yields, or *Art* can adde" (Heroical Epistle. Sapho to Philanis l. 44) he writes, and again, "For though 'tis got by *chance*, 'tis kept by *art* (l. 70 Elegy XV. "The Expostulation").

One is immediately reminded of Baudelaire's letter to Desnoyers (1855): "You ask me for some verses on your little book, verses on nature, don't you? On the woods, the great oak-trees, on greenery, insects and the sun, no doubt? But you know well that I am incapable of sentimentalising over vegetables, and that I stand out against this extraordinary new religion which by its nature necessarily shocks a spiritual being. I shall never be able to believe that the soul of gods lives in plants, and even were this so, it would preoccupy me little, I should still hold my own soul of higher price than that of these sanctified vegetables. I have even always thought that there was something distressing and

almost vulgar in the endless reflowering and renewal of nature".

Or of George Sand's, "I have no enthusiasm for nature which the slightest chill will not instantly destroy. Or William Blake's, "Natural objects always did and do weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me".

Donne believed in the necessity of the bodily side of life. At the same time, as I have tried to shew, he saw its transitoriness. He believed in the power of man's intellect, man's art, over nature, that it was nature adorned by man which alone was worth while. Therefore Donne believed, as did Baudelaire, that it was man not nature that owned the spiritual "soul".

In "Elegie V" ("His Picture" l. 2) he says, "in my heart, where my soule dwells" and again, "True Vertue is *Soule*, Alwaies in all deeds *All*" (l. 36 "A Letter to The Lady Carey, and Mrs. Essex Riche, From Amyens") and,

"Materiall Crosses then, good physicke bee,
But yet spiritual have chiefe dignity"
(ls. 25-26 Divine Poems "The Cross") and
"This Soule to whom Luther, and Mahomet were
Prisons of flesh" (ls. 66-67 "The Progresse of the Soule").

With such a philosophy, death falls naturally into place for Donne.

"Death gets 'twixt soules and bodies such a place
As sinne insinuates 'twixt just men and grace,
But worke a separation, no divorce".
(ls. 43-45 "Elegie on Mrs. Boulstred")

and, "But thinks that Death hath now enfranchis'd thee" (l. 179 "The Second Anniversary").

To a man with such a belief in spiritual things, death was indeed no divorce. The above lines, I think, bring out Donne's firm faith in the Kantian "beyond".

But it is all very well, one might say, to assert all these things, to trace the progress of Donne's doctrine of the soul, but it hasn't shown anything.

We have concluded that Donne was a believer. The next step is—to use his own words—"Seeks true religion. O where?" (l. 43, Satre IV). He added: "There is no Vertue but Religion" (l. 16, Letter to Mr. Rowland Woodward).

Where did John Donne believe? We know he believed in a soul, in the "holiness of the heart's affections", as Keats puts it, in a letter to Reynolds, but where did Donne found this belief—in what? What, in other words, was his true religion, which is longing?

I believe the answer to this to be in the real value of the inner self, in an idea of selfhood consonant with the results of the deepest mystical thought of all ages. "Seeke we then our selves in our selves" wrote John Donne (l. 19 Letter to Mr. Rowland Woodward).

It is possible to find comparisons to this saying in the Upanishads, Nietzsche, and in all the greatest philosophical speculative writing.

But let us hear more of Donne on self: "For thou thy selfe art thine owne bait" (l. 26 "The Baite"); "Be thou thine owne home, and in thy selfe dwell" (l. 47, Letter to Sir Henry Wootton);

"If men be worlds, there is in every one
Some thing to answere in some proportion
All the world's riches" (ls. 29-31, Letter to Mr. R. W.);
"I am a little world made cunningly" (l. 1, V Holy Sonnets).

There is a world, a home, inside each one of us. That is at any rate the divine message of Donne's poetry. We are both our own heavens and hells, as Milton and Blake wrote. We must descend into ourselves to save ourselves. This does

not imply selfishness. It is only the religious ignorance and superititous fear of the western world that has attributed a selfish significance to Buddhism. Man indeed must lose himself in himself. For he is both the whole universe and nothing. His selfhood in relation to eternal things is, as Edward Carpenter wrote, as a drop to the ocean, and as an ocean to the drop. That is why Donne advocates, "God in you to praise" (l. 70, Letter to the Countess of Huntingdon).

To do that we must first of all know ourselves; that is why Villon wrote in despair, "Je coignois tous, fors que moy mesmes". It explains Tchekov's "Man will only become better when you make him see what he is like" (the Notebooks); and John Donne, "But we know our selves least" (l. 16 Divine Poems. "Ode: Of our Sense of Sinne"); and also, alongside this, "For mee (if there be such a thing as I)" (l. 33, Letter to Sir H. W. At His Going Ambassador to Venice).

It is this paradox of selfhood, the drop and the ocean, the all and the nothing, that is responsible for many of the apparent paradoxical sayings of John Donne — and indeed of literature, down to our present day, where T. S. Eliot is puzzling many with his naive versions of an older philosophy.

"O love and hate mee too" calls out John Donne in the last line of "The Prohibition". And these paradoxes dog his verse. Selfhood is a paradox. It is both the drop and the ocean, heaven and hell, the physician and the poisoner. Why are these paradoxes interposed in the first place? Where to they lead us? They lead us to the beautiful conception of unity. They are the artist's representation, by symbols, of infinity.

"Every idea continued into infinity becomes its own opposite", wrote Hegel, a dark enough saying but perfectly clear in the light of mystical writing, or of any writing such as Donne's, which is raised out of our pathetic four-dimensional contimuum of thought.

"And not an inch, measure infinity" (l. 30, Letter to The Countesse of Bedford, on New Year's day) wrote Donne. Infinity is unity, unity is infinity, the serpent biting its own tail, the junction of the paradoxes, the spark, to put it lamely, struck from the paradox, the arch of which the two sides of the paradox form two halves.

And what on earth was unity for Donne? I believe the idea of unity to be the transcending one in Donne's thought, life and letters. It runs through all his work. Let us look at what he says on it: "Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one" (l. 14, "The good-morrow"); "If our two loves be one" (l. 20, "The good-morrow");

> "Then changing hearts, to joyne them, so wee shall
> Be one, and one anothers All"
> (ls. 32-33, "Lovers Infiniteness");
> " wee,
> (Who Prince enough in one another bee)"
> (ls. 13-14, "The Anniversarie");
> "Perfection is in unitie" (l. 9, "Loves Progresse");
> "Since separation
> Falls not on such things as are infinite"
> (ls. 47-48, Epithalamions IV);
> " Should chance or envies Art
> Divide these two, whom nature scarce did part?"
> (ls. 124-125, Epithalamions II, "The Equality of Persons");
> "Though it be some divorce to thinke of you
> Singly, so much one are you two"

(ls. 127-128 Epithalamions III, "The Raising of The Bridegroome");

"One fire of foure inflaming eyes, and of two loving hearts"
(l. 225, Epithalamions XI, "The good-night");

"If all things be in all,
As I thinke, since all, which were, are and shall
Bee, be made of the same elements" (ls. 9-11, Satyre V);

"Shall recollect, and in one All unite"
(l. 26, Letter to The Lady Bedford);

"He would have justly thought this body a soule,
If not of any man yet of the whole"
(ls. 21-22, Divine Poems, "Resurrection, imperfect").

There is a common soul of mankind towards which all souls strive to go, and man is in relation to that soul, as he is to himself. But there was no longing in Donne, none of that slightly pathological "Sehnsucht" of Heine—and that is where perhaps Donne differs most from Charles Baudelaire. There is no unhealthy nostalgia with Donne, rather a quest, an iron quest. He was no didactic social reformer in his verse. He was, one feels, a learner, a little afraid of the immensity of what he had discovered.

This was John Donne's first contribution to literature, the quintessence of his thought, an insight into those things beyond us towards which all spiritual beings lean, an insight into that beyond in which man can both lose and find himself. These spiritual aspirations are perhaps satisfied on earth by religion, especially Buddhism; but religion is only a crutch on the way. Man's hunger for a spiritual state is probably most fully satisfied, on this earth, by love, since only in love does one reach unity. In a fusion of two souls, which produces life, lies the greatest allegory of eternal existence that is vouchsafed to us.

Love and unity are the pabulum of Donne's fine, passionate and illuminating mystic gift—they are the pulse of his spirit.

The following could well be put as epitaph on Donne's poetical works; it is a quotation from Rabindra nath Tagore ("Sadhaña"): "It is said in one of the Upanishads : It is not that thou lovest thy son because thou desirest him, but thou lovest thy son because thou desirest thine own soul. The meaning of this is, that whomsoever we love, in him we find our own soul in the highest sense. The final truth of our existence lies in this. (Paramatma), the supreme soul, is in me, as well as in my son, and my joy in my son is the realisation of this truth. It has become quite a commonplace fact, yet it is wonderful to think upon, that the joys and sorrows of our loved ones are joys and sorrows to us—nay, they are more. Why so? Because in them we have grown larger, in them we have touched that great truth which comprehends the whole universe." G. A. WAGNER.

The Secret Love

SAY not in words your love is mine
A glance my soul will stir,
A revelation so divine
Is heaven's messenger.
A sigh, a smile, or tender gaze,
So eloquent can be,
He looks beyond the sheltering haze
Who seeks divinity.

Love is a secret oft confined
Where beauty most does dwell,
Till kindred Love awakes to find
What tender glances tell;
Give me a sign, speak not a word,
And all my soul will move,
To know by me your heart is stirred,
And Love awakes your Love.

Leslie Greene.

Teacups

DIM is the room, my dear, remembered room—
Dim, yet no dolorous near-sunset gloom,
Tearful beyond the window frame,
Finds entrance there. The quiet mirth of flame,
Chuckling in coals, flutters from copper fender
To conjure laughter among slender
Curtseying shadows, makes June roses blow
Where painted teacups catch the glow ;
Even their steam is rosy with the fire.

Oh, these are memories that move
My banished heart more than desire!
I love
Late winter afternoons, ere lamps are lit,
When the harsh, jocund mask is tossed away,
Tired limbs relax, and I and Lena sit
And tell each other of our separate day,
Create new dreams, revive forgotten ones,
While Thomas purrs and flexes a fat paw
And Mack wags stumpy tail and whines for buns,
And teacups foretell anything but war . . .

Porcelain teacups, laid for fireside tea,
Are pretty, lovesome things—pretty to see,
Lovesome as symbols of suffusing ease
Where no note jars, whose silent harmonies—
Books, pastel hues of rugs and cretonne, deep
Armchairs, lampshades, pictures—seep
Into the sense insensibly.
Then the cup upon my knee
Becomes a pool day's troubles drown in ; broken
Trust is mended here; the retort unspoken
Galls not ; tongues of malice—mine no less
Than other men's—their venom lose in it ;
Triumphs mellow, pleasures fuse in it ;
Failure is revelation, weariness content.
This is the miracle my kettle sings ;
Teacups are enchanted things.

I slammed the door on love each morning, went
My necessary way apart,
Face smiling or severe, as was discreet,
But seldom mirroring my heart.
Only my purpose drove my feet;
Only my spirit did not stir
From her
To whom I stole when eve, relenting, led
Me home. There by our fire I'd shed
The frosty gabardine a man must wear
Jewlike, when he tempts the market air ;

There we would merge again, love and I, there
In aromatic teacup rediscover
That unity of loved and lover
Which lacking, man is clay—which is the whole
Substance of soul.

While lovely things survive, the hand
That fashioned them, or fondled them, lives on,
Adown what centuries soe'er
The dying footfall's gone.
Old churches ring
(Hark, and you'll hear)
With chiselling,
And where forgotten folk would stand
To chant the creed, their fingers grip the pew
And leave the touch of love upon it too.

So with my painted porcelain—
Relic of age more smooth, more slow
Than ours to savour beauty. Though
Long since jugs, basins, teapot perished,
The hands that made, the hands that cherished
The cups remain.
Can it be my teacups' secrets lie
In hands which loved them once, so do not die?

But have not other cups, scarce older than
The touch that set them out for tea,
Power to charm content in weary man?
To self transcending soul wed him anew?
Oh, true!
Yet they and my old porcelain agree
In this—'tis love that set them there,
'Tis love that in them lingers,
Just as through centuries the prayer
Abides in moulded, oaken pew
Impressed by deathless fingers.

Dim is the room, my dear, remembered room,
Yet o'er ten thousand miles of sea
It shines—a beacon in this present gloom.
Laughter still flares from coals, the fender gleams,
No lamp is lit,
The fireside table's laid for tea
Where she and I some kinder day shall sit
Whose union now is only in our dreams:
And still love's miracles in teacups lurk
'Gainst my return—how long delayed!—from work.

D. C. Bray.

*The Convex Mirror**

I MEET my old friend in his quarters new;
He greets me in his own accustomed way
And looks me up and down as who should say:
"Are you here too?"

I wonder, would he feel a little shy
If I reminded him of times gone by
When his reflections gave nor blame nor praise
To other ways?

I well remember how he used to brood
Upon that noble room I also knew,
And marked with single eye the laughing crowd,
The sober few.

There masque and music mingled with the sway
Of gleaming front, of neck and shoulders bare;
Matrons and maids, young men and old were there,
And most were gay.

Anon he found his whole horizon filled
By such as hidden truth and reason sought;
And seemed to lose himself in sober thought,
All movement stilled.

There many a pleasant evening had he sped
While games of chance or skill were played of old,
Or prose or poem musically read,
Or story told.

And now he leans against a cottage wall,
His monocle perchance a trifle grim,
His eyebrow raised, as one had said to him:
"Well—rather small?"

And yet I do not think he makes a mock
Of gleaming brass and darkly polished oak;
I see he notices the inglenook
And hollyhock.

He cannot fail to recognise these books,
This chequered board on which the pieces wait;
But new to him the ancient ceiling-hooks,
The sunlit gate.

Ah well, I hope you like the place, my friend;
Like me you see the present, not the past;
Small it may be, but this is home at last
Until the end.

John C. Lyth.

*Swans**

IF I had the large hands of the gods
For holding a swan,
She would nestle as soft as a sparrow,
There in my hand.
She would nestle as close as an egg
Warm from the nest.

I wonder if so does the water
Feel her curved breast.
Or the grace of the delicate fans
Of her webbed feet.
Or feel the deep ripple of feathers
Soft on its own.

The low waves curl over like fingers.
If I were blind
I should still know the swan for her beauty
By her shape in my hand.
I should still feel the curving perfection,
The wonder of her.

W. V. Wall.

Think You I Can Thank You?

THINK you I can thank you
for a day that was so short,
when the warm arm could not link you
or the mind's blue kiss consort?
Think you I can thank you
for a day that was so short?

Give me twenty like it,
give me twenty more,
and, oh, I'll rise and strike it
that hidden inner door.
Give me twenty like it,
give me twenty more!

And if you give me decades,
and nights instead of days,
about the door tall stockades
of tenderness I'll raise,
if you but give me decades
and nights instead of days.

But think you I can thank you
for a day that was so short,
when sunlight now is shadow
and memory is thought?
Think you I can thank you
when all has come to nought.

Ronald Westbrook.

*Summer Rain**

DO you remember?

We had passed by the old mill house,
The stream, running in slow channels
Between reeds; the high yew hedge,
Hiding a garden's fascination
Laced gold by sunshine.

We had passed the gravel pits
Made beautiful as lakes of deep water,
(Cool water, ruffled by wind movement),
By weed flowering islets,
By moor hens, by colour,
By the occasional flowering whiteness
Of a swan's aloofness.

A few stray cumulous clouds
Had piled themselves in the sky's hot blueness—
Piled as cream cobalt mountains,
Crested with gold,
Yet not seemingly heavy with rain.

And then the rain came—
A sudden wind, cool and urgent,
Swirled among hot trees
In music of utter abandonment—
The rain—a million wet, cold fingers,
Caressing leaves, trailing their wetness
Over hedges and roadway; opening wide
The faucets of the sky
Until the dry lane became a runnel,
And the meadows were wet-cool, silver-green.

Do you remember
How we looked at each other, and laughed
To hear the scurrying wind,
The quick pattering of the rain?
A gay, an intimate laughter,
That was one with the satisfied thirst of
the hedgerows,
With the joyousness of the birds.

Beautiful was the evening
With its cool rain-fingers;
The gradual cessation of the storm;
The softness of the mist-gleaming sun;
The green-gold extended tree boughs.

Do you remember?

Mabel A. Beeken.

The Carol Singer

WE have a robin every morning
Who perches on the lilac tree
To you his song sounds like a mourning
But the way he sings is gay to me.
When the earth is bare and cold
When the frost lies on the mould
His ruddy chest will flame like gold.

However chill or damp the day
You'll see him huddled there
Alone, no other bird will stay
Where silvered cobwebs hang, and where
Every dripping lonely tree
Stands outlined upon the lea
Where the road leads to the sea.

When December's world lies white
And the holly-berries glow
My robin with his throat so bright
Goes singing out across the snow,
Where the river—a silver band—
Runs slowly by the farmer's land
From where the deep dark forests stand.

The Winter's o'er—is gone and lost
My robin sings no more
On boughs now windy tossed
Or near the squirrel's store.
Next winter He'll sing on the lilac tree
Just as gay as he used to be
And I know t'will sound like a song to me.

Valerie Merrill.

*I Must Not**

I MUST not let the thought of you remain
Like perfume, clinging to me all day long.
Nor let the echo of our perfect song
Too oft repeat its rhythm and refrain.
I must not think of how your cheek has lain
So close on mine, nor consciously prolong
The thrill of sight and touch. I must be strong
Lest sweetest ecstacy be turned to pain.

To hold your eyes with mine, and let love flow
Invisibly between; to feel your hand
So light about my hair—dear heart, I know
That these are secret things I must not tell,
A dangerous garden where I dare not dwell—
But if I do, then God will understand!

Peggy Barwell.

The Sapling

O, STRIPLING tree, whence did you come,
What aimless chance of bird or breeze
Let fall that seed, that cosmic crumb,
Close-packed with latent energies,
Which needed but the breath of Spring
And cradling loam to bring to birth,
A birth which is no sundering
But two-fold thrust in air and earth.

Their union your growth shall bind,
For you, their child, were lately sprung
From Earth, your mother, to the wind
Whose breath shall loose your leafy tongue.
An equal love shall be your care,
No preference your growth shall spoil,
And for each twig that takes the air
A rootlet shall embrace the soil.

You shall not haste, nor fret, who hold
Communion with eternal things;
In Summer, or in Winter's cold,
Content with what the season brings:
Not yours to count the days till death,
Watching their ever swifter flight,
Daylight and dark complete one breath
And Winter is your only night.

You have no care, who know not time—
Who do not live from day to day—
That long before your mighty prime
Great dynasties shall pass away:
Nor shall you know the shame of pride,
Of will and purpose grown infirm,
For not until your heart has died
Shall you fall victim to the worm.

You ask no boon and nought despoil,
And what you take you give again;
With leaf-mould you enrich the soil,
With summer green seduce the rain;
And, wheeling with the sun, your shade
Is vigilant against his lust,
Lest virgin soil should be betrayed
And good earth blow away in dust.

Ah, love me, self-sufficient one,
Open your cold, indifferent heart.
Add me to Earth and Air and Sun
And give my love some trivial part;
Here, take this stake of seasoned oak

Which to your service I will bind,
It is not meet that unborn folk
Should find you twisted by the wind. *H. W. Harding.*

*Last Song of the Jester**

MY cap and jangling bells
My stick and bauble
To him who buys and sells—
Give for a rouble:
Get me candles that shall light
My soul's dark way tonight!

Her face was like the flower
Found before winter's death.
Never again the hour
When breath mingled with breath;
Never beneath this sky
Tryst again she and I.

My jestbook's leaves shall make
Kindling for that strong fire
Of sapless boughs I break
To build my body's pyre.
Here, when you come and find me dead,
Strike the flint—the prayers are said. *Thomas Rhymer.*

*Thoughts in a Churchyard**

HERE in a quiet place among the trees
Of this old churchyard, we can be alone
As on a desert island, while the roar
Of ceaseless traffic thunders round our shore.
We need not fear the harsh tongues in the tide
That shouts outside,
For here among the graves grown green and round
The gentle swell is stilled beyond all sound,
And has no fall.
And we are free to love—no "thou shalt not"
Stalks empty-handed through the gifted day
Forbidding truth—too soon our turn will come
To sleep in separate darkness, and to rot
Imprisoned in the cold stone of a tomb
While others take our places in the sun.
Our days are flying now like summer leaves
Towards the mound, and everyone who grieves
Has lost—
Then let us build a monument to life
Before the certain ravages of time
Claim us exchanging love and vows for dust. *Phoebe Hesketh.*

Time With a Drooping Hand

I

TIME rides on every autumn wind
And with a sweeping stroke conveys
Beauty from beauty—see, his days
Fill up your eyes and make you blind.
Time falls like snow upon the skin
As softly and, with snowflake chill,
Blights the rose-lips, the blood until
The flowers of flesh fall, withering.

Time like a miser draws the mint,
The golden coin of life away
From beautiful and young and gay
And leaves them poor and winter-bent.

Time a slow scimitar descends
Upon the walking waking world;
Soon maid and man like leaves lie curled
And their short music swells and ends.

II

Time with a drooping hand imprints
A crabbed signature upon
The beautiful, the wise, the young
And shrivels flowering flesh. He paints
You, and your perfect balanced grace,
Smears all the splendours of your prime:
He will reduce your pride to lime
For see, his fingers on your face
Already scratch around your eyes
And ravel through your mellow hair:
Time like an endless conqueror
Will claim you, beautiful or wise.

So do not struggle much with him
For death and he walk hand in hand,
And only ripples on the sand
Will mark your journeying through time. *R. L. Cook.*

*The Broken Song**

DO not begin again the song unfinished,
The song that broke among the voiceless dead;
Gaily they sang, and gaily fought and perished.
We must remain—the yet uncomforted.

Do not begin again the song unfinished,
Let it be theirs for ever; never wake
On living lips the end in silence cherished,
Lest we, the undefeated, also break. *Celia Randall.*

Prayer to the Night

OH Night, thou queen of gentlest majesty,
Hanging the lamps of wonder in the skies
To give balm to world-aweary eyes,
Heed thou the prayer that now I make to thee,
That when thy sister, Sleep, comes after thee,
Dropping her veils one by one on men,
So lightly that they know it not, and then
After her comes in flame capriciously
The most extravagant of sprites that be
Within thy train, oh Night, the formless one,
The Giver of Dreams, who sends his fancies spun
On airy looms to tranc'd mortality,—

Then this I plead, that at thy bidding he
May only on my lady's hallowed bed
Such tissue soft of tender visions shed
As will caress her with the amity
Of dew for flowers; cool woodlands let her see,
Where leaves and moss make harmonies of green,
While half-seen elves are glimpsed the boughs between,
And little rills make idle melody;
Or let her, down the paths of memory,
Hear chimes of golden moments pealed anew,
Good friends to meet or bygone scenes to view,
Blue lakes mid mountains, suns that set at sea.

Then if, Dream Giver, thou hast still with thee
Those dragon dreams of awe that sear the brain,
Of battle dread, of Hell's undying pain,
Of witless loss or lonely misery,
Of dizzy fall, of friend turned enemy,
Or ceaseless toil to some receding goal,
Of comrade's death or cry of tortured soul,
Of forms of fear and ghostly wizardry,
Then, if thou wilt, send down this hoard to me,
And I will walk the deserts of despair
Night long if she can have but fancies fair
To tend with bliss her sweet tranquility,
Until at last she lifts her lovely head
To find Day's waiting beams around her bed.

Nottingham. *Brian B. Walker.*

The Carpenter

LIFE is a log from which the carpenter
Planes off a tiny wafer, day by day,
So slight you do not note it fall away
More than you heed a thread of gossamer.
Yet, some day, you may anxiously demand
How many more will be.
In vain you ask, for none can ever see
The Carpenter's left hand. *Edward Vandermere Fleming.*

L'heure Exquise

HOUR of ablution . . .

My hand-mirror
Is cleansed of thought-dust.
Now it is calmly
Reflecting this soft glow,
This nacreous blue-glow,
Iridescent,
Caught in a timeless
Sacred moment.

Swathed is the leafage
In wadding shadows,
Intricacies.
But the tall palm
Is alert, expectant.

My eyes unblinking
Are glued to the blue-glow,
My senses transmuted.

Steeped in this light iridescent,
I search the silence
For the soothing surf-sound
From the shore unending
Of Life's hid ocean.

I search the still air
For the subtle fragrance
Of the amaranth
Of Nirvana.

Ku-pi.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

12th May, 1944

HE goes beloved of hosts he never knew,
He who loved noble aim and high desire
And held that morals of the sty and byre
Remained, in novel dress, unfit for view;
For he was of the Elders, now so few,
Who in the Muses' temple feed the fire
And brook no free-verse hymnal in the choir,
No crooning in the village idiot's pew.

From college-hall, from dwelling in the west,
The voice has gone that was so swift to bring
Light to the eye and courage to the breast;
But none can know what songs he yet may sing
Who sang so gaily on the Knightly quest
Which ends to-day; for he has found the King.

Frank Higgins.

"If One I Love Were Dead"★

"IF one I love were dead", you said to me,
"Then should I know I could forget, for she
Would be beyond my finding".
Time crouched beside us, hearing all you said,
And, listening, stared along the road ahead,
Dark and unwinding.

"If she were far away", I heard you sigh,
"Then were I sad, for she would speak and I
Should hear no more the speaking".
Time rose and moved away, as he had seen
The barrier of the hills that stand between
Her and your seeking.

Phyllis Lyth.

Birthday

IF he had set the spinet-strings to charm
The ill-tuned ear, the flagrant heart of fame,
Time might have interposed a jealous arm
And caught him, unsuspecting, at the game.
If he had asked of grandeur nothing more
Than perfumed glove to kiss or dice to cast,
Time's lackey would be waiting at his door
In livery, to capture him at last.

But borne upon his soul's simplicity
He has outmatched the hoofbeats of the hour;
Should they pursue him to eternity
He still may pause to pluck the fairest flower.
No season overtakes him, for he goes
With the first snowdrop and the latest rose.

Muriel Spark.

Western Sky

FAR through the sunset's most compelling glow,
When the last earthly words have all been said
And all earth's hungers have been fully fed,
It seems that to an unknown land I go . . .
I have enjoyed this earth, through heat and snow
And now by unknown forces I am led . . .
I cannot vision who it was that said
I must make haste, for note—my steps are slow!

But with the faith of every bird that flies
I will with joy approach the setting sun,
And as the glory deepens when day dies
Recall life's happy hours and go, as one
Who dearly longs for years with no goodbyes,
Where we with war and partings shall have done!

December 7, 1946.

Alice Hunt Bartlett.

Poets and Pretenders

A NEW volume of poems by Henry Treece, "The Haunted Garden" (Faber, 7s. 6d.) revives in us the old controversy as to what is the place, if any, of thought in poetry. Nobody, certainly not ourselves, would deny the charm or the merit of this book. The poems have interest and give pleasure and are obviously the fruit of a ripe experience and a literary talent which commands respect. They are enriched too, with all that associative imagery with which beauty may underline truth; and in all the arts of prosody defy criticism. And yet they remain, for all their power to recall to our minds with a single phrase the richest moments of personal experience, unexciting in that special sense which we associate with poetry. Mr. Treece is an artist in every aspect of that overworked word and in the exercise of that human skill displays an abundant humanity and even tenderness in the expression of his thought. But there is the rub. It is the mind of the poet which speaks, a mind which feels itself adequate to initiate the enterprise of making poetry; a mind which apprehends and comprehends beauty and has at its service a technical competence beyond reproach. With these Mr. Treece appears to ask, we think rather unreasonably, for an emotional response in us as though we could, at will, reconstitute his delightfully processed but somewhat dehydrated feeling with the genuine milk of our own humanity. But he does not touch the fount of our emotions. These can respond only to the deeper penetration of his own, and we must remain but half content with a literary excellence which whatever else it may be is without that magic which is called poetry.

But industry and an indubitable talent merit some reward and Mr. Treece achieves what seems to be his not inconsiderable goal with an ease of expression which is only possible to an adept. The poem which names the book is perhaps an excellent example to offer in support of our criticism. On the literary side it has no fault, as a poem it is as unexciting as dried egg.

"In this sad place
Memory hangs on the air
Fragile as Spring snail's tiny shell,
Coming to the sympathetic ear
Gentle as bud's green pulsing in the sun,
Suave as sin in a black velvet glove.

The old faces gaze
Wistful as birds, among the nodding leaves;
They watch the pleasures ghosts may never share.
And through the twilight hours
Old voices call along the river-banks
And out of the high-walled garden.

Why do they sigh,
The gentle ones in the flowering musk;
And what are the words of the song
The pale stranger sings as he walks
The garden's still, deserted paths,
Like a boy searching for his dog?"

And yet thought is as essential an ingredient of poetry as clarity, sincerity and words. What kind of thought then is it which goes sweetly and unnoticeably into the poetic amalgam? We suppose that there is only one kind of mental activity — a

philosophic, reflective sort of cerebration—which can serve the poet's high aim. The crux of the problem is what should motivate this activity. Most human endeavour originates in the will, progressing in direct relation to the strength of that quality; but the exceptions must be those creative labours which we term the arts. The creation of independent life, the immortality which great work possesses, is not a mortal function but a spiritual; not a mental but an emotional thing; and the motivation is provided from a mysterious source beyond control by the will and even, in the case of the greatest work, beyond the influence of the mind. The hard fate of what might be called the professional poet may be imagined if he must wait for the infrequent uprising of those uncontrollable inspirations but it is certain that an unusual degree of susceptibility to them may be acquired by certain natures. The poet is primarily therefore a temperament and only secondarily an intellect and, in all cases, the poem must originate in an emotional haze, proceed towards no foreseen goal and achieve finality beyond reason. The mind must subserve this secretive master just as the fleshly hand must obey the will. And such thought as may find itself enshrined in the finished masterpiece will be no result of conscious or directed cerebration but a matter whose profundity will surprise no one so much as its author.

What then can we say of "The Selected Poems" of Francis Carey Slater (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.) which have received, so we are told, laudatory reviews in our chief literary periodicals. Certainly they have clarity, sincerity and words, and are not so cerebrally adorned, so consciously literary, as those of Henry Treece but they too lack that divine fire which is so necessary; and they fall far below the literary level which he achieves. Indeed there is much that is merely pedestrian in this collection and not a little that is trite. The author is a South African and his themes are provided mainly by his native land. There is a vicarious interest in some of them for that reason, but at best the quality of his work is that of good verse only, musical at times, and informed by a genuine love of his fatherland, but objective and not greatly concerned with the hinterland of the human heart nor of life's deeper significances. Let us quote a couple of stanzas from a typical poem called "On Wynberg Hill". These are a good example of both Mr. Slater's powers and limitations and also, alas, of that prevailing delusion about poetry which compels us to so much tedious repetition.

"And on the hither side of the siren-bay,
Like giant-horseshoe gleaming in the sun,
The magic-mirror of still Zeekoe Vlei
Will melt ere-long the sunset's golden bars,
And gathering the diamonds of the stars
Double them one by one.

"Nature unlocks her treasuries and gives
With flowing hand to human heart and brain:
What in return yield we, poor fugitives,
Who scorn her gifts, whose transitory dust
Is seldom moved except by hate or lust
Of power, or flesh, or gain?"

Another type of verse, not original perhaps but sufficiently distinctive in an unattractive manner is contained in "coffee and bitters" by nathan ralph (Macmillan, 6s.). The absence of capitals in the title and name prepared us somewhat for the pretentious absurdity of the contents of this book but the result exceeded

even our expectation. For rubbish this is and of that purely cerebral sort which goes deliberately to work to impress the gullible and knows no embarrassment so revolting as simplicity. Take this poem, horrifically entitled "Bloodstains on a Grave" and ask yourself, gentle reader, whether there is justice in the statement made on the dust cover that Mr. nathan ralph's poems are strongly imagistic, full of sustained emotion and brilliantly ironic. If it were not rude we would suggest the substitution of "moronic" for that last word. Here it is:

"The grip of hand
on mine
released . . .
where fingers
closed
incomplete their lock
on mine . . .
Blood rushed boldly once
to fuse the circle.

The straight
rebellious jaw
unswerving . . . the
steps along
a known path
shattered . . . are inert
rubbish
jostled by the wing.

Where your fingers touched, my hand
is chilled . . . is barren . . .
bloodstains on a grave."

It is a refreshment for the soul to turn to a volume by Walt Taylor entitled "English Sonnets" (Longmans, 8s. 6d.) for the contents are poetry of a high order and, as one would expect, all in that most famed of prosodic forms which survives even in these aberrant days as a model for the serious poet. Mr. Taylor, in a somewhat argumentative introduction, deals with current and bygone controversies upon the question of what a sonnet really is. He disdains the exclusive claims of the Petrarchan fans and their assertion that Shakespeare wrote only 14 line poems; and appears indeed to regard length, metre and rhyme schemes as hardly material. He would be correct but for one thing and that is the right of the inventor to the exclusive use of the word "Sonnet" for his original and particular form. But, of course, the sonnet is an emotional idiom, a spiritual attitude, as well as a prescribed prosodic invention, and if Mr. Taylor will be content that all sonnets other than Petrarchan be called "irregular" sonnets we shall not quarrel with him and can proceed to enjoy this most excellent anthology of terse masterpieces which he reprints for us. The industry and the critical judgment displayed in the selection of these Sonnets (regular or irregular) will reward any who will buy the book. The enterprise is most valuable and timely and we are grateful to the compiler for a public service.

A good title is as rare as a good book and it seemed a pity to obscure "Brief for Beauty" by Reba Hudson (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) by printing it in white on a dust cover of so bilious a yellow that it became practically invisible. However the goodness is not in this case confined to the outside, and this Canadian poet deserves a better introduction. Her brow is not unduly lined with thought when she sings and her songs have a simplicity which goes well with their vigorous quality, as in *Wild Rose Bushes in Autumn.*

"Utterly mad they laugh from their rocks
on the hillside,
Utterly gay and mad now that their
work is done.

Down they can look and laugh and
joy with the ebb-tide;
Aloft on their cliffs they can shimmer
and smile and sing to the sun.

With tumult of molten colour they
startle the young spruce,
Startle the wildest gulls as they dip
to the turquoise bay;
Flaunt their incarnadined wares at the
tern and the grey goose,
Stirred and concerned with the same
high drifts of the gale as they."

Poetry is not a difficult thing: it is only impossible to some people. To those who have it in them it is a matter only of awaiting the impulse for expression, and Reba Hudson appears to do this. If she composes consciously it would seem to be no more than by way of polishing and revision, for her work has just that unself-conscious sound which is associated with all impulsive and sincere utterance. It interprets many things for us but never Reba Hudson and yet she is ever-present in her words. That is because she is concerned only to express what is in her and not what she believes herself to be. Self-expression is not in its true meaning an egotistical display.

First books are things which in the absence of a very good reason to the contrary ought to receive a welcome, and there is no reason to withhold one from John Short for "The Oak and the Ash" (Dent, 6s.). His work, however, is not without blemish and in particular bears sign of some labour to be original. That is, of course, to mistake the true purpose of the poet, which is not to impress but to express, not to remember but to forget the literary talent with which he is furnished, and to earn success by emotional response rather than by mental superiority.

This is the advice, almost the plea, which we offer to Mr. Short. Some of his verse is too clever but he had something to say which is well said and here is a short sample from a poem "Invocation". Even in this however there is some quenching of the fire in the interest of literary excellence:

"O Shades who from the bone and hair
Live in me
As a God in an ilex tree,
Did you when clothed in other flesh
Quicken man's eyes
With a similar surprise?

I cannot know: it seems original,
Fresh to our breed,
This urgent and infinite need
Of passion and tenderness.
An hour before this hour
Did sunlight burn in the flower?

It did not so appear, or I was blind;
Yet as I force my hands

Down through the hour-glass sands—
The desiccated bones of ancestors—
I grasp the life that slips away
And say yester-year is to-day."

Less conscious of any need to move our admiration, but not more successful in wringing our withers, is Stanley Snaith with "The Inn of Night" (Dent, 6s.). His work is vigorous, with generally a less studied note than Mr. Short's, but there is still too much evidence in it of a cerebral origin to offer hope of emotional response from the reader. That requires work upon another plane or, shall we say, in another dimension, but with this book we are still in a well-landscaped but unfruitful literary domain where inspiration is, one would suppose, as unwelcome as it is unsought. And yet there is a gleam of something brighter behind or beyond the almost contemptuous modernism of "The Enemy" and we think the author could do better with less effort and more patience to await an adequate emotional stimulus to write:

"We sank the planets of your eyes
To their last foundering glory,
And parched in stone about your lips
The dumb "memento mori".

Yours the neutrality of the dust
None shall assault or save:
Our abrupt banners shall not stir
The drab streets of the grave.

But what a thousand strong you lost
Dead you retrieve alone:
Stripped, helpless, humble in defeat,
You throw our bastions down."

In all activities and in all ages men have endeavoured to substitute mental concepts for spiritual; expediency for morality; logic for emotion; forgetful of the truth that they are themselves emotionally motivated in all their major undertakings and dependent for their very continuance not upon expediency but upon moral integrity. The politician may perhaps be excused for his unawareness of his own and our needs; he is by training, and his dubiously ambitious temper, anxious only for the short term advantage; hoping by an accumulation of these to secure a long-term tenure of power. But the political genus was long ago discredited and we need waste no time on it. It is with the same opportunism in the less immediately important, but fundamentally more vital, creative artist that we are concerned. No doubt there are some so spiritually bankrupt that their minds alone can serve them, while others, intent upon a career, become ego-centric from self interest, with the result that their work becomes cerebral and self-conscious. These artists, and that is the word for them, may be driven by egoism or economic necessity, or emotional poverty, we do not know or care which, but the result is to turn them from the true fount of inspiration with its intermittent outpouring to the cold and sterile continuity of their minds, to fabricate with technical art and mental perception a simulacrum of the spirit. That there should be some who do this is inevitable. What is disturbing is their number. It would seem that, by some operation of the law of supply and demand, the phenomenon is due to a growing

materialism in the mass of humanity, and that we are getting the poets we deserve. Whatever the cause, and we hope it may not be that loss of vision without which we shall perish, it is becoming increasingly arduous, through the numbing effect of repetition, to summon an adequate indignation to combat it. It is obvious that thought has its place in poetry but not that kind of thought which is born in the mind. Poetic thought is a flashing thing, a pegasus, and the mind, a mere vehicle, should be harnessed to it. Our present vice is to put the cart before the horse, no doubt as a tribute to or a consequence of the invention of the internal combustion engine which has dispensed with the animal altogether.

So we come to "Hinterland" by Hal Summers (Dent, 6s.) of whom the publishers say that he moves in the scenery of the sub-conscious mind . . . conducting himself there with no morbid excitement,—his calmness of mind the steadying force for a spirit exulting in experience. Verily is the cart before the horse if Mr. Summers has indeed subjected his immortality to his intellect; but this statement may be no more than an unconscious back-hander such as our best friends occasionally administer from the nicest motives. Let us examine the poems and form our own opinion. There is assuredly little excitement, morbid or otherwise, to be found in them. His account of the Earth's and man's creation is typical of his intellectual muse wherein the wonder is nicely steadied and controlled to a none too lucid literary trifle. Here is the poem,

"Inane and Vacuous Earth"

"Inane and vacuous earth
And darkness over the face of the abyss.
One said, let light be: light was: He at this
Might have reposed, but no: flowers, beasts, the birth
Of mankind claimed His word, His artifice
And proof of self. O world it would have meant—
Daylight, that's all, no suffering, no rebukes,
Had the creative labour, soon content,
Stopped short at 'fiat lux'.

But he of limited vision and bare faith
Who death and the after death
And facts without a face
Of infinite time and space
Leaves as beyond his grasp and lets them rest,
Even he this centre of a creed
With a wild awakening shall read:
'Et homo factus est'."

What a pity that Mr. Summers in subduing his own excitement has robbed us of ours.

To discuss the next book "Essay on Rime" by Karl Shapiro on any poetical plane would be an absurdity, as absurd as in some respects the book is itself. The whole is in a particularly arid blank verse—one would have expected rhyme in such a work—which is indistinguishable from a moderately good prose save for its physical appearance. It is possible that the author, in his investigatory labours, talks sense, we are not however interested in that aspect. What intrigues us is its presentation as a book of poetry, for that it emphatically is not.

"Poems" by Robert Finch, a Canadian importation by Geoffrey Cumberlege (Oxford University Press, 6s.) is a first collection in book form of verse previously published in periodicals. What to say of it save that it is not our sort, or any sort,

of poetry we do not know. An active mind with emotion under firm control composed most of it. Here are three stanzas of a longish poem which are typical of the rest and of the whole. Let them speak for themselves:

"Civilized people
Melt at a play,
But touch their tipple
And hear them bay.

Slavery's bad
But worse the dwindle
Of dividends bled
By a slavery scandal.

So the first ass
To show things up
Ate pounded glass
In his bowl of soup."

Miscellanies or anthologies are multiplying and we believe them to be a convenient device for the amateur of poetry who is anxious to make himself acquainted with current work without too heavy a hazard of time and money. "Salamander" edited by Keith Bullen and John Cromer (Allen and Unwin, 6s.) is certainly useful from that point of view and the curious may even find in it photographs of most of the contributors. There are also English poems rendered into French and, taken by and large, the book contains a selection of modern verse which will enlighten the enquirer if it does not always satisfy him.

Australian Ballads

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand provide the last home of the ballad proper, and that is the ballad as a communal song, without known authorship and having certain definite peculiarities. The English ballad died out with the spread of education and printing, and, as Robert Graves points out in his introduction to "The English Ballad" (Benn, 1927) "for more recent examples of the ballad-proper in English we must look outside England to the new territories of America and Australia, where groups of English-speaking colonists bound together by common dangers and interests and separated by the sea from civilisation are (*were* would be more exact.—N.B.) able to form an intense communal life".

In Australia, of course, this "intense communal life" soon gave place to more sophisticated living but, until the spread of the gramophone and wireless upcountry, small communities provided a field for the growth of ballads such as existed nowhere else in the English-speaking world.

A. B. Paterson's "Old Bush Songs" (Angus and Robertson, Sydney) is perhaps the best collection of Australian ballads. They were first published early this century and have been re-published since. Do not confuse "Old Bush Songs" with Paterson's own verses. This is a collection of genuine ballads, not the synthetic kind composed by Paterson himself, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Will Ogilvie and a host of other Australian "balladists", but songs composed and sung by bards, now unknown, in the bush-ranging, gold-digging and overlanding days. The whalers of Hobart, Twofold Bay and Sydney, for instance, had a song called "The Hat with the Black Velvet Band" which was in the true cannon of the ballad but, unfortunately, the words were never preserved. The following song, sung by the shipbuilders of the Derwent (Tasmania) in the 80's is typical:

Come all ye sawyers stout and bold

Whose hearts are on the blue gums sold
And list while I a tale unfold
Of the poor downtrodden sawyer.

When we work hard and cut the stuff
The buyers come and treat us rough
They swear the measure's not enough
And rob the weary sawyer.

"The Wild Colonial Boy" and similar ditties feature in Paterson's collection, including this lugubrious song "The Dying Stockman" which has the real cowboy ring:

A strapping young stockmen lay dying,
His saddle supporting his head;
His two mates around him were crying,
As he rose from his pillow and said:

Chorus.

Wrap me up with my stock whip and blanket,
And bury me deep down below,
Where the dingoes and crows can't molest me,
In the shade where the coolibahs grow.
Then cut down a couple of saplings,
Place one at my head and my toe;
Carve on them cross, stock whip and saddle,
To show there's a stockman below.

It goes on like that for six verses, with the chorus repeated between each. There is also a pearl of commonsense called "My Mate Bill", who was "killed in the flaming mulga a-yarding a bald-faced steer". The author adds:

He'd never make one of them angels
With faces as white as chalk,
All wool, to the toes, like the hoggets,
And wings like an eagle-hawk.

Such doleful ditties are not the only fare provided by the Australian balladist. A complete social history could be written as a background. They begin in the convict-emancipist days, sketch in the struggle between "the people" and the sheep squatters, celebrate a widespread sympathy with the bushrangers, sing the delights of "a home of my own by some clear waterside" after "the Land Bill has passed, and the good time has come" and records, on the other hand, the labourer's disappointment with "the string-bark cockatoo", or small selector, who offers "ten bob an acre" for reaping and feeds his hands on "quongdong duff, paddy-melon pie and wallaby Irish stew". These songs, crude and sentimental as most of them are, were the authentic expression of the Australia of their time. Those who wish to capture the spirit in which they were sung should read Henry Lawson's sketch "The Songs They Used to Sing" in his volume of short stories "On the Track".

A later collection of ballads has been edited by Australian author Will Lawson entitled "Australian Bush Songs and Ballads": introduction A. R. Scott" (Frank Johnson, Sydney, 1944).

NORMAN BARTLETT.

From Scotland to Czechoslovakia

RECENTLY Mr. Charles Morgan, in a closely-reasoned analysis of Turgeniev's treatment of the love story, pleaded against the mobilising of art and artists for transitory ends in the unquiet world of to-day. The regimentation of the modern mind is something all true poets must resist, but it is not easy. The problem has been admirably stated by Dr. Joseph Bard in his lecture "Only a Poet's Word" in the 23rd volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, *Essays by Divers Hands,* edited by the Hon. Harold Nicolson (Oxford University Press, 10s. 6d.). "The poet's double sight", Dr. Bard says, "his two minds active with two differing intentions, means a constant strain and a continuous effort to maintain balance and achieve harmony. The existential world assails him from every angle. The sound of tortured metal is less loud than are the voices of dumb intentions shrieking their competitive challenge in the face of the void. The sounds of fury will not reach the poet's mind if his ears remain obedient to his vocation". It is not easy to stand apart from the vulgarising of the modern world, from the press of total politics, and no one in his senses would plead for the art of the ivory tower and the poet's refusal of general experience. He must sift and filter thought and feeling through his own God-given faculty, without the interference of tendentious political teaching or social instruction. I was particularly glad to read this essay; others likely to be of interest to readers of the *Poetry Review* are Mr. Willard Connely's study of Emily Dickinson, Mr. Ivor Brown's discussion of Poetic Drama in the Modern Theatre and Mr. N. Hardy Wallis's compact estimate of Thomas Hood.

Another volume of essays by contemporary writers comes to us from Scotland. *Robert Burns,* edited by William Montgomerie (Maclellan, 6s.) contains surely the last word of modern criticism on the Ploughman Poet. Edwin Muir leads off with an admirable analysis of what he calls the Burns Myth. "He is a Protean figure; we can all shape him to our own likeness, for a myth is endlessly adaptable; so that to the respectable this secondary Burns is a decent man; to the Rabelaisian, bawdy; to the sentimentalist, sentimental; to the Socialist, a revolutionary; to the Nationalist a patriot; to the religious, pious; to the self-made man, self-made; to the drinker, a drinker. . . . We cannot imagine Wordsworth or Shelley or Tennyson or Shakespeare turning into a popular myth". And then Mr. Muir goes on to discuss what the myth has done to the poet in the people's mind. "He moulds their thoughts and feelings; but they mould his, too. . . . They make current a vulgarised image of him, and a vulgarised reading of his poetry; they take him into their life, but they also enter into his; and what emerges as the popular figure is a cross between the two". Certainly it is a fact that tens of thousands of Scotsmen who are generally deaf to the appeal of poetry could pass an examination on the chief poems of Burns. He gives them pleasure and they take him to their hearts, especially on Burns Nights when the bowl is flowing and the poet is somehow rosily confused with Sir Harry Lauder and Buchanan-Dewar. Mr. Muir refers to Mr. T. S. Eliot's statement that it is important that the desired public for poetry should be "sensitive, critical and educated,—conditions only possible for a small public". Mr. Muir seems to agree, but essentially Burns stands between the minstrel's harp and the printed page; if he has a greater measure of unassailable popularity than any other poet it is because his deceptively simple art conveys instantly the universal emotions in comprehensible language that sings. Art aspires to a condition of music, and Burns, who was first and foremost a singer, achieved memorable music in his work. "Poets of to-day", as Mr. J. B. Pick says in a later essay in this book,

"suffer from technical anaemia; their verse is only strong intellectually. Burns' work has a physical persuasion". It is that quality of memorable simplicity, of physical persuasion, that I had in mind when I wrote in the last issue: "When a modern poet can write of the tragedy of the two world wars with the echoing simplicity of a Burns, Peace may have found its best evangel".

One modern poet at least, Mr. A. S. J. Tessimond, seems to be reaching out after a persuasive simplicity. His *Voices in a Giant City* (Heinemann, 6s.) are understandable voices:

> The right word at the wrong time
> Is wind-caught, blown away;
> And the most that the ages' sages'
> Wisdom and wit can say
>
> Is no more to the quickest pupil
> Than a midwife's delicate steady
> Fingers aiding and easing
> The thought half-born already.

He has a quick eye and ear for the contemporary scene, London, Money, Hollywood, Dance Band, Press and Radio, Paris Cafe and Advertising. But then, some of the immortals our schoolboys quote and construe, had similarly an eye and ear for the ephemerae of their times. Mr. Tessimond is not, I think, likely to be an immortal, but his commentaries on twentieth-century life more often attain to poetry than not. It was Mr. W. R. Titterton, I remember, who launched a sonnet on London with the opening line, "Yonder lies London the abysmal whore", and Mr. Tessimond, of a younger generation, writes:

> I am the city whose fog will fall like a finger gently
> Erasing the anger of angles, the strident indecorous gesture,
> Whose dusk will come like tact, like a change in the conversation,
> Violet and indigo, with strips of lemon streetlamps
> Casting their pools into the pools of rain
> As the notes of the piano are cast from the top-floor window
> Into the square that is always Sunday afternoon.

I have known Mr. Tessimond's poetry since midway between the wars. Sometimes he has followed after strange fires, but he is in the trend back now, I fancy, into the broad traditional stream:

> We have dealt too much in ciphers; sat in corners,
> Out of the wind, talking in undertones
> With private signs, drawing too close together,
> Drawing the blind.
> And we have hated the others,
> Those behind other blinds.

There is much cleverness in Mr. Tessimond's book, and much also that is beautiful and memorable.

Viscount Mersey in his *Helen of Troy and Cleopatra* (Murray) is a traditional poet in a narrower sense than I have used the term above. He turns to the heroic past and uses the heroic line with graceful unpretentiousness as a medium for simple statement of fact or legend:

> As Cleopatra was by birth a Greek
> With all the flair and talent of her land,
> Her charm for Romans is not far to seek,
> Her influence not hard to understand.

And of that other fatal lady, Helen of Troy:

Comparing the few dates that still survive
Her age it seems was nearly eighty-five.
With hue unblemished and unwrinkled skin,
Firm, supple, straight and slender as a pine,
Lips red, teeth white and cheeks not fallen in,
She bathed, used no cosmetics, little wine.
Serene and fresh, as fit for any fray
In talk or love as on her wedding day
She showed no sign of langour or decay.

Evidently Lord Mersey is determined to save both ladies from the crows that pick at the reputations of bygone lovelies. He has a pretty turn of phrase, and when he writes

". . . she was never made a martyr
But died at peace and in her bed at Sparta,"

I find myself frankly wishing that he would cast himself as a humorist and give us an historical verse-equivalent of "1066 and All That".

For many years literary circles in London have welcomed Mr. Paul Selver and recognised his art and scholarship. I think it was in the "New Age" of A. R. Orage's time that I first came across his poems and verse-translations, and as that is nearly forty years ago and he has been labouring devotedly in the same fields ever since it can be seen how true is his sense of vocation. He has now put what may be termed an interim crown on his life's work by the publication of *A Century of Czech and Slovak Poetry* (The New Europe Publishing Co., Ltd. 12s. 6d.) an anthology of more than 200 pps. of his own translations from thirty-seven Czechoslovak poets, and in doing so makes us his debtors. Of the translation of verse from one language into another he says in his 50-page Introduction: "the meaning, the metrical structure and, to a certain extent, the musical qualities of a poem in one language can be reproduced in another, if sufficient care is taken, and also, it must be emphasised, if the translator is capable of absorbing an adequate amount of the emotion which inspired the original poet". Well, it may be said at once that Mr. Selver has obviously taken sufficient care and is eminently capable as a translator. He is most at home in the idiom of his 20th-century compatriots, and that perhaps is natural, for the Czech poets of the late 18th and early 19th centuries wore their stilts very self-consciously. In our own time they turned to verse-experiments through contacts with the Soviets and with Paris; but in the main, strongly and recurrently, the note in Czechoslovak poetry is elegiac and nationalistic, the grief and pride of peoples who have suffered oppression and the tides of war while other more fortunate nations consolidated their physical and cultural resources. In one of J. S. Machar's poems (1902) the tendency is epitomised:

I am a Czech, even as I might be
A German, Turk, Gypsy, or negro, if
I had been born elsewhere. My Czechdom is
The portion of my life which I do feel
Not as delight and bliss, but as a solemn
And inborn fealty. My native land
Is within me alone; and this will I
Trim round at no man's beck, nor give it tinge
To match with fashion's daily whim; nor shall

They rob me of it; when above my tomb
The grass has grown, it shall go living on
In other souls—and if, some day to be,
In them it wither, then and only then
Shall it be lifeless . . .

An anthology like Mr. Selver's will deepen our understanding of an heroic people.

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR.

THE CREATIVE MYSTERY

FEW writers, either past or present, have so nearly 'plucked out the heart' of the creative mystery, or revealed the true function of poetry, as Professor G. Wilson Knight in his Shakespearian interpretations, now brought to a conclusion, we are told, in his latest book, *The Crown of Life* (Oxford University Press, 1947, 18s.), composed of six essays on the Final Plays, and the culmination of twenty years' work on Shakespeare. In the essay 'The Writing of Pericles', Professor Knight propounds explicitly his particular view of the creative process in Shakespeare, which applies in some measure to every great poet:

> There is meaning in Shakespeare's art, but that is not to say that Shakespeare has a meaning in his head and proceeds to express it in his art. His art is more than expression; it is creation, born from a fusion of his own thoughts, dreams and intuitions with a chosen narrative, the choice of which exists in the order of action, not in the order of thinking. The poet responds, perhaps without knowing why, to a certain tale; and the precise reason for his decision to follow up response with action must be as elusive and unanalysable, to himself and to others, as life itself (p. 34).

On the next page he speaks of 'the creative discoveries of art,' discoveries made by the poet as a result of creating. To those with first-hand knowledge of the poetic experience, this description of the process is incontrovertible, and disposes once for all of the more Philistine theories of 'intention', plus concentration on character and plot, which, while important, are subsidiary to the *whole design* existing in the creative mind of the poet. It seems fitting to quote at some length here from a book published nearly ten years ago, *Principles of Shakespearian Production*, in which Mr. Knight gave a detailed and brilliant analysis of the creating of *Macbeth*, crystallised in one potent phrase: 'His imagination is now powerfully at work, a hound on the scent'. Any creative writer will respond to that last vivid metaphor. Then he goes on:

> As he writes, old images and thoughts from *The Spanish Tragedy* and his own *Henry VI* and *Lucrece* cluster in his mind. He uses all past impressions that fit. He doesn't search for them, but knows they will come, racing like filings to a magnet; all he has ever seen or heard that fits the *Macbeth* idea. . . . And all the time he is drawing, too, on past emotional experiences of his own life. . . . Unconscious and conscious elements blend and fuse together . . . His artistic conscience is never for one moment relaxed. He alters, selects, blends, copies, borrows, and so on; and for divers reasons. But each and all are, in the very instant of adoption, coloured and moulded by a single dominant and unwavering purpose . . . During the writing of *Macbeth*, everything would to Shakespeare have seemed expressive of *Macbeth*. The most amazing things happened; he couldn't enter a tavern without hearing an invaluable piece of crime psychology; nor read a book that wasn't crammed with helpful imagery or philosophic or historic suggestions. The play was writing itself . . . Then one day in the street

> he saw a child all covered with blood. At another time he wouldn't have thought twice about it. Now it beats and beats in his mind (pp. 22-25).

Anyone who can write in this way of the creative process has every right to propound any theory he will of Shakespeare, or indeed of any poet, since it is clear that he himself lives within the creative centre, and all his work, all his interpretations, spring from that one vital source, the only reliable and valid starting-point for living criticism. In the last twenty years, and especially during the 'thirties', the art of criticism has sunk to so low a level that a barren facetiousness passes for wit, revaluation has become devaluation, and the despicable pastime of 'debunking' is acclaimed by those as incapable as the critics themselves of recognising or appreciating greatness, and for the good reason that such recognition requires a degree of greatness, potential if not actual, in the critic himself. Lacking this quality, writers and readers regard as a mark of 'brilliance' any attempt to reduce the genius to the status of the 'ordinary man'.*

In the finest essay in the book, a wonderful analysis of *The Tempest* called 'The Shakespearian Superman', Prospero is described as 'the eternal artist rejected by the society his art redeems'; more, he is the 'superman', the forerunner of the new race, 'still labouring for the new thing not yet matured, for new worlds as yet unborn'. The great creative artist is indeed at once the redeemer, and the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness bearing the sins of a world he is called upon to redeem; invariably he is despised, rejected and eventually crucified. But his work goes on. His life is a mystery, lived strangely apart from the body of humanity, with which he can never merge, yet he alone understands humanity's troubled heart; he alone, in plumbing the mysteries of personality, has come to understand the supra-personal life; he alone, without losing his humanity, becomes mysteriously supra-human. Indeed, his existence on earth is entirely mysterious. Mr. Knight remarks that intuitions of the artist's rôle are to be found in Wordsworth, Blake, Nietzsche, all glimpsing 'the same divine potentiality'. Jesus, who lived art instead of creating it in the usual forms, called this divine potentiality 'the kingdom of heaven'. Art has supremely the power to lead humanity to that kingdom, and in stressing the importance of the inner world, the artist is simply underlining the affirmation that 'the kingdom of heaven is within you'.

All Professor Knight's Shakespearian, and other poetic, interpretations, are concerned with the creative mystery and its limitless significance for human life. 'Without vision the people perish'. Always it is to that essential vision that he directs us.

DALLAS KENMARE.

*Thus a contemporary music-critic can write in a well-known provincial newspaper, speaking of a justly famous orchestra and its conductor: We were also given a Handel arrangement, presumably scored by Sir —— himself and at once more tasty and more tasteful than such dishings-up usually are . . . and a pretty little confection for strings, whose confectioner's name Sir —— mysteriously refused to reveal.

Philip Chadwick's *Dawn Music*, reviewed in our last issue (p. 213), is published by the Crabtree Press, Brighton, at 2/6.

Elizabeth Myers

IT is not customary for obituary notices to be printed in THE POETRY REVIEW, but the death of Elizabeth Myers on May 24 would seem to merit a short appreciation of her work. Many seekers after truth will have read her three great novels, *A Well Full of Leaves, The Basilisk of St. James's* and *Mrs. Christopher,* each of which is remarkable for its different approach to the single theme of love; together with a fourth book, now unhappily lost to us, they were to have formed a complete cycle on this theme. Elizabeth Myers (or, as I would prefer to call her, Mrs. Littleton Powys, as a tribute to the happy relationship she held for the last three and a half years of her life) was a writer, too, of short stories which were published in numerous magazines and may soon be collected in a posthumous volume. And readers of THE POETRY REVIEW will also remember her championship of Mr. Redwood Anderson in the July-September issue of 1944 which provoked such an interesting correspondence in later issues. (She was engaged on a review of Anderson's Paris symphony when death overtook her at the early age of 34.)

It was in fact a reference in the article on Anderson to Edgar Allen Poe's definition of poetry which prompted me on reflection to write of her prose in a Poetry magazine; for, recalling Poe, she writes that "Poetry should give the soul an elevating excitement"; and it is not only because her writing fulfils this function that Elizabeth Myers, novelist and short story writer, may claim recognition as a true poet.

This passage from her first novel will show one feature of her poetry, an insistence upon "the tremendous importance, the *greatness* of little things":

> What splendour lies in these exquisite memories in cockle shells: Damson bloom shaking over old walls; Sea-sand pocked by the toes of gulls; Prismatic colours in petrol pools on the road; the spangled web on the briar; ferny patterns of rain on smooth pilasters; the heath when its tints were those of an old tapestry, dishevelled green, cool sorrel, glitter of water; wind pleating on ponds; a diffusion of larch-green light in far evening skies; the fresh smell of newly-ironed silk; designs traced by dust, and smoke, and leaking gutters!

Nor were her powers restricted to observation and description only, for she had too that extraordinary ability found sometimes in children to get inside and, as it were, to *Be* all that she saw—"Ready to be anything in the ecstasy of being ever . . ."

Her whole concept of life was governed by heart and soul, and beautiful in its simplicity. One of my happiest memories is of her reading of Louis Untermeyer's short poem in which a coal-miner, confined to the bowels of the earth, asks that God may fling him "a handful of stars" to light his world. And for those who were privileged to know Mrs. Powys, in person or through her writings, her memory now "like a handful of stars" makes beautiful the evening of their thoughts.

> To me the thought of death is terrible,
> Having such hold on life, to thee it is not
> So much even as the lifting of a latch.
> Only a step into the open air,
> Out of a tent already luminous
> With light that shines through its transparent walls,
> O pure in heart!

T. R.

Dynamics of American Poetry: CXVIII

Stanton Coblentz, publisher and poet, sends us "The Pageant of Man" in 320 pages, which may be purchased for $1.00. In the comments on the jacket from our most distinguished critics one understands it is highly regarded. Breathless, I am confronted by the immensity of the achievement. A few lines of the opening page will tell of the meter and rhythm of this lengthy poem, "Against the background of the void":

For half of man's allotted years and more
I ranged the highways of this worried earth
Like some lone pilgrim from a distant shore,
Baffled by men of foreign speech and birth.
I scarcely seemed to share
The fires, the swords and fevers of my kind,
But drank another warmth and light and air,
Was blinded when they saw, and saw when they were blind.

The crash of granite streets, the crack of trade,
The snarl of factories and the market's drone,
To me were but a jarring undertone
Which I would catch dismayed,
Like one who may not fight yet hears the hacking blade.
Dimly, as through a glass,
I watched gray armies storm across the world,
Saw blue-lipped waifs and sleeveless beggars pass,
And greed, with pestilence-spotted flag unfurled,
Drawing the hectic thousands round her knees.

The following lines finish this fine and heroic poem:

"There must be meaning in the faith which dwells
In each unconscious deed of man and mole;
Which digs the burrow, builds the honey-cell,
Trills with the lark, swims with the herring shoal:
That life itself is life's most ample goal;
That it is good to feel, to move, to be,
And drink the sun, and watch the seasons roll,
There must be meaning men but dimly see,
And hints of some remote, diviner destiny.

"So, though we know the curve of space is wide,
And reckon years beyond the reach of thought;
Though we no longer strut in pomp and pride,
Remembering what the whirling orbs have taught,
Still let us live as if our hours have wrought
The fabric of the ages; let us seek
As if to find what time itself has sought;
As if worlds falter when our hands grow weak,
And the trooping stars rejoice when we ascend a peak!

"Thus, and thus only, can we hope to soar;
Thus, and thus only, can our lives attain
A rapture and a light unfelt before,
And beauty winnow her rich-kerneled grain.

And thus, perhaps, still struggling, we may gain
A glimpse of some high purpose, shadow-barred,
Toward which all life must yearn and grope and strain,
And which, though trails be long and stones be hard,
Glows ever round our sight when skies are myriad-starred!"

Is it not very natural to be affected by the title of a book? This rather unusual title "Stars and Atoms have no Size" by A. M. Sullivan (E. P. Dutton & Co.) is on the jacket, with *Poems of Science and Industry.*

I wrote Mr. Sullivan, on receiving the book, that the first book of poetry I offered the public was, *shyly,* dedicated to "the poetry that there is in science and the science there is in poetry." But Mr. Sullivan has gone much further. A former President of the Poetry Society of America,—those who admire this realm of poetry will like his using as his subjects such characteristics of our society as levers, clocks, dynamite, radar and atomic power.

Mr. Sullivan was born in Harrison, N.J., and is a graduate of St. Benedicts Preparatory School in Newark. At present he is associate editor of Dunn & Bradstreet publications. Of course a man associated with Wall Street would be inclined to write atomically! Mr. Sullivan is the author of a number of books, including: *Day in Manhattan, Ballad of John Castner* and *This Day and Age.* A lengthy foreword prefaces this book of poems, leading minds to accept it. We read: "The poet writes of the machine age as man's triumph over nature, endowed with all the beauty and magic of the elements. He finds poetry in steam as well as in fog, for they are both born of the same formula. Wheels and pistons are musical as well as pianos and brass horns. And the exquisite beauty in the steel rhythms of a suspension bridge is comparable to the delicate cable work in a spider web."

This reviewer was born within the sound of a fountain that threw its waters 185 feet into the air; also there was the music of a saw-mill that echoed, hour after hour, in Bennington, Vt. There is no need to separate the extraordinary advance of the instruments of our age from poetry. Let's see what Mr. Sullivan does about it in "The Eccentric Wheel":

Action of mind or matter starts
A little off dead center;
The engine's awkward wheel
Gathers the piston's thrust
And cushions the level lunge of steam
Into swift arcs of motion.

Life, thought, and valor grip
Far edges of the circle
Like the elbow of the man
Who winds the barrel organ,
Or the woman's rhythmic toes
That press the sewing treadle.

Only the idiot mind
Revolves about dead center;
Thought takes the willing thrust
Of reason at the rim;
The rolling earth and planets
Sketch their orbits in ellipse;

And the vast eccentric of the skies
Moves with the wrist of God.

Mr. Sullivan's poems belong to the realistic school. *Hydraulic Ram* is a typical example:

Brook water is a snare
Runs up the pastured hill,
Coughs rhythmically and floods
The leaking cattle trough.

Slow gallons crowd the pipes,
Pushing in cold gulps
Like moles caught in a ruse
As trap doors slam behind.

The mountain stream enslaved
Defeats the downward drag,
And gravity reversed
Pays tithes to set it free.

The crow and the dancing corn
Applaud the artifice
By which the mossy sluice
Can bathe a hillock green.

I find it most interesting that after these many years there are gathered together poems concerning *The Eternal Sea*—an Anthology of Sea Poetry, edited by W. M. Williamson, with drawings by Gordon Grant (Coward-McCann) for, as American Editor of *The Poetry Review*, I offered a prize in 1925 for the best poems on the sea and gathered together in one volume one hundred original sonnets to the sea. The prize was divided between Miss V. Sackville-West, of England, and Robert Hillyer, of New England. My preference between these illustrious poets is that of Robert Hillyer in his poem which follows:

The rivers of the years find rest in thee,
And thou hast drunk the ages one by one;
All loves and hates, all earthly things begun
Are ended so and merged eternally.
The past has yielded everything, and we
Who labour now shall yield what we have done;
Thou scatterest the ashes of the Sun,
But him thou givest back at dawn, O Sea.

Long after men have perished from the earth
Still will he sink at evening to thy breast
Where death itself is but his own reflection.
To whom thou slayest, thou shalt give rebirth;
Thy lover in the gardens of the west,
Thy child eluding thee in resurrection.

We have a slim volume by Eve Triem (Dutton and Co.) who has had the distinction of winning the 1946 Annual Award of the League to Support Poetry. We will give you an excerpt from the poem from which the title of the book is taken:

If you left me now,
startled by the noise of my heart—
as if noon were invaded
by the dark hunger of owls,
and the songbirds were screaming—
I would crush all summer
like bergamot in my hands,
and go through the wrecked fields
crying:
"Have you seen a parade of doves
brighter than scattered corn,
and shining like water, when they fly?"

An old friend of mine Lansing Baldwin dropped in the other afternoon with *Nine Desperate Men* and *Quinquivara*, written by his son C. Lansing Baldwin, Jr. His manner was somewhat apologetic and humorous. They are extraordinary books, these two, with extraordinary pen and ink drawings by Dicki. Young Baldwin belongs to the fortunate intelligensia of our day and is possessed of a vivid imagination. One wishes he had directed his talents differently, with more attention to the great art of poetry. In glancing through the first volume one pauses at one of the best expressions in the book—The Drowsiness of Winter

The drowsiness of winter will prevail
In the sunland, in the ether,
In the wheatlands, fenlands, coastlands,
O prevail,
And the snowblow shall prevail,
Emanation of the ice-eyed ghosts.
And the running darkness
Of the crossing of the host
With the fluted draymen of the sleetfields
All in longness and thinness come,
All across the frost fallowed clouds,
All, and all chanting frost
And each clamping frost to the heart,
And each under the spell of the drifting
droves of winter.

And again in the second volume happily we find Sibelius.

The gentlemen don their hats,
The music is over.
In the country cats purr
By the fires and the barn filled with clover
Is sweet and dusty.
There by the side of a rusty mower
I listened to Sibelius
On the radio, and the rain fell
Outside with an echo of far off floods
Pushing mud in the well
And converting the roads
Into half a hundred Holland canals.
This giant Sibelius of Finland
And the world at large unfettered by walls,

I thought, this man of the inland plain
I can admire, he having the immense,
Intricate pattern of the heroic
At his heart's core, the intense love
In his brain !

You will understand, reader, that my choice was conservatively guided by the tenets of true poetry.

A Wider Arc by Melvelle Cane (Harcourt Brace & Co.) is well recommended to us in the following comments : In its lyric moods, Melville Cane's poetry follows the tradition of Emily Dickinson : feelings sharpened into joy and pain by sudden glimpses of beauty, wise observations on the climate of the heart, musings on human imperfectibility. But in the poems so-called light, he has a savage weapon of his own.

"I Have Heard" is one very suggestive of the poetic melancholy of Emily Dickinson:

I have heard
The arrested cadences of bells
When bells no longer sway;
I have found
The sound that swells from silence,
That dwells and drifts in silence following sound;
I have known
The melody
That dies in throats of birds.
And now, at last, I hear
The call you never voiced, I never answered;
Now you have ceased to call.

In nature's vein Mr. Cane gives us "Two Stars"

Two stars lie caught in a tree. . .
A shrivelling angle
Of sight—that snares a star in a tangle,
Of leaves—that shrinks a star to a spangle!
I have only to stand, to free them.
To step three steps, to see them
Clear of earth and true to sky,
Eye to eye.
Two stars rose from a tree.

Here we have a lawyer poet. If Mr. Cane is as good a lawyer as he is poet, his cases must be won brilliantly.

Robert Burns, a play by Anne Burns of Seattle, Washington (Meador Publishing Company, Boston) is a moving and thrilling account to all Americans of the man who wrote "A Man's a Man for a' That," presenting the poet as the lone radical in the deeply conservative town of Dumfries, Scotland, during the period when the world was seething with revolution.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

Prophetic Poetic Plays

Six Historic and Romantic Leaders who Visioned World Peace

MRS. ALICE HUNT BARTLETT'S latest book, a volume of historic poetic dramas entitled: *Six Historic and Romantic Leaders Who Visioned World Peace* (Brentano's, royal octavo, red cloth, 275 pages, illustrated, indexed, $7.50) is a work of many distinctions. The first—a milestone in the five centuries of published dramatic literature—is that Mrs. Bartlett has achieved the distinction of publishing, in her lifetime, in one volume, plays about six leaders of six important epochs in the history of mankind—a distinction that was denied to Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. I use Shakespeare and Jonson as illustrations because their names were cited when I made the above statement without their names. Some take for granted that Shakespeare had the happiness of seeing his plays published in a collection in his life-time. That is not the case. From William Jaggard's monumental *Shakespeare Bibliography* we find that Shakespeare's historic plays were only published in one volume in the first folio, in 1623—seven years after his death. As the first folio does not give the dates of the plays, I verified the dates of publication of the individual plays from copies in my library (which also contains the rare reproduction of the first folio made for Queen Victoria). I have likewise checked Jonson's plays in the first folio, *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson,* a copy of which (bearing the autograph of Henry Washington, an English ancestral kinsman of George Washington) is in my library. Ben Jonson's folio is, by the way, one of the Grolier Club's "*One Hundred Books Famous in English Literature*". Of course, Mrs. Bartlett has had the advantage over Shakespeare and Jonson of two centuries of additional history (as to leaders) and three centuries as to events which make her book timely. But is is interesting to note that those two great dramatists did not dramatize the epical and epochal William the Conqueror.

Another unique distinction of Mrs. Bartlett's *Six Historic and Romantic Leaders* is that, in addition to presenting the plays, the author also offers to supply "historic records, copies of rare, ancient maps, engravings, prints, music, costume designs and other articles assembled after years of research, to facilitate authentic presentations". For instance, the producer who undertakes to present *William the Conqueror* can show that leader scanning the pages of the Doomsday Book of different shires, from the rare reproduction of that document. Similar documentation is possible for all the plays. That is especially valuable to motion picture and television producers.

That unique combination of plays and the means to document them gives reality to the statement on the jacket that: "A purpose in publishing these historic-poetic plays is to make available for the theatre, motion pictures, radio, television and pageantry, historic dramatizations of great leaders who sought to promote world peace in the past twenty-three centuries: Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.), William the Conqueror (1027-1087 A.D.), Catherine the Great (1729-1796), George Washington (1732-1799), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)." To give effect to that purpose, Mrs. Bartlett has selected over fifty different scenes capable of being presented as full-length plays, or as single-act plays, or as combinations of scenes from different plays, illustrating highlights in the lives of illustrious personalities of six different epochs of the past 2,300 years, in six different parts of the world, or in programs for historic celebrations.

Five of Mrs. Bartlett's leaders were eminently associated with English history, while the sixth, Alexander the Great, who lived before England's history became

definite, has been given a prominent place in English drama. Mrs. Bartlett tells us that in reviewing the romantic and dramatic lives of these great leaders she noted evidence that they had sought to shape the world in the form which appeared most likely to produce enduring peace. Their endeavours appear timely and important to our day and age. For instance, we behold *Alexander the Great* (Act V, Scene 1) at Susa, looking beyond his conquest of the world, dreaming a dream in which he expressed ideals of world peace not unlike the dreams of present-day leaders of thought.

When travelling through Italy and Egypt, Mrs. Bartlett became convinced from the remembrances of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra that have been preserved by close to one hundred generations that those two personalities were greater than represented by dramatists heretofore. In Act II, Scene 2 of her *Caesar the Undefeated*, Mrs. Bartlett presents Cleopatra as a charming young queen listening to Caesar's ambitious hope to make "*a kingdom where peaceful men may work, think and speak*", which is the high hope of our times!

William the Conqueror (Act III, Scene 1) epitomizes the achievements of the genius who is credited with having founded Anglo-Saxon civilization. In September, 1087 A.D., in the Monastery of St. Gervaise at Hermentrude, *William the Conqueror*, preparing for his death after a romantic and dramatic life, sums up what he considered his greatest achievement . . . *his welding into a united nation the separate, warring units of England, and giving to this nation the incomes needed for its operation from equitable taxation based on his survey of national resources contained in the Doomsday Book.* Providing adequate income to governments from equitable taxation is still an ideal goal today!

Catherine the Great's ideal of "*Liberty of universal commerce*" is an ideal of the United States and United Nations. *George Washington's* apprehension regarding the doctrine of "*arming for defense*" is shared by many today who see the nations rearming on vaster scale than ever. And eminent statesmen, including Winston Churchill, express belief that a Federation of European States will promote peace, as did Napoleon! In *Washington Pre-Eminent* Mrs. Bartlett, besides presenting a number of key scenes suitable for presentation on the annual anniversaries of the founding of the United States, presents (Scene XXXIII) Washington's vision as prophet of aerial navigation and his issuing the first passport to an airman.

Bringing her "Leaders" up to date as to their dreams of world unity and peace, Mrs. Bartlett presents key scenes of their personal and romantic lives. That has a practical value to the historian as well as to the student, the editor, the script writer, the actor, the lecturer, and the general public. For instance, Woodrow Wilson, late President of the United States, opened his *History of the United States* with the statement that "It will hardly be disputed that among rulers and statesmen of all time Julius Caesar must be placed at the head; that among military leaders the greatest the world has yet known was Napoleon Bonaparte . . ."

Most reference books and encyclopedias give almost uniform summaries of the achievements of Caesar and Napoleon. One who attempts to find something different, whether intimately personal, romantic, or poetic, in their lives faces the monumental task of examining several thousand volumes of contradictory, confusing records and interpretations—involving years of hard labour. That is true of all six "Leaders". That is also true of about a hundred personalities associated with the "Six Leaders", named in the index. Some, like Aristotle, are as important in many ways as the leaders themselves. Dante considered Aristotle "*the master of those who know*". Mrs. Bartlett brings Aristotle to life as the teacher of *Alexander*, who never forgets him.

In all her plays Mrs. Bartlett has used poetry effectively to highlight the factual text. Lack of space confines me to citing only a stanza here and there. In *Alexander the Great* (Act III, Scene 1) at the conclusion of the fascinating romantic scene between Alexander and Thais, Alexander offers Thais the lighted torch saying:

You and I will burn past glory to gain more light,
Will that pleasure you, Thais—Child of Flame?

As she springs forward to accept the torch Alexander remarks:

We have talked so long
That time itself seems growing old!

Caesar the Undefeated opens with seven introductory sonnets, four with quotations from Shakespeare. The sixth, introduced with Shakespeare's line "*But I am constant as the northern star*", follows:

Have we such metal to be wrought today?
To fashion in a man to meet our need,
To hungry years can we such ingots feed,
Or are we soft and tunneled with decay?
If fate has such an one, why still delay?
There is much more for man that must be freed,
And many are, would follow such a lead:
Ever life's great sea rolls and nations pay.

And thinking men ask oft, How blows the wind?
Reading life's tale in sand and trees and stone,
Tracing the meaning on these tablets lined,
God's multitude shall not be left alone.
Not for one people or one age, designed,
Are the vast patterns of the night's stars sown.

In Act V, Scene 1, Cleopatra declares her love for the exhausted Anthony thus:

I shall be less than dust. . . .
But not the love I bear you, Anthony,
That cannot float as nothing down a shivering wind!
When in the limitation of these human frames the lists are thinned
And falls to earth my frame—this frame you love—
It cannot be the sweet consuming fire which lighted us to realms undreamed
Shall at the first fell gust of death's approach expire!
For have we not the promise writ upon the sky?
That this it is which will not, cannot die—
This love—the tree of life!
Indeed, it is alone the flesh that dies!

In *Catherine the Great* there is a wealth of romantic and heroic poetry, as well as grim, challenging stanzas. In Act III, Scene 3 (page 135) Catherine is apprehensive that her beloved Prince Potemkin is turning from the Court to the monastery. Answering her, Potemkin, who has expressed desire to become a "simple man", reveals that the heroic deeds of youth no longer appeal in his advancing years. He says:

Age is the last grim hurdle 'ere the cold
It is the last stern hazard man must win
Grimmer than any combat held with sin
And harsher than surmounting lust for gold!

The Empress answers, partly challenging:

Henceforth is it the myrtle and the vow?
The joining of an order—not the dance?
In the deep crimson of a perfect rose
Methinks the eye beholds a living flame,
One who has greatly lived, Caesar by name.
Perchance, and where the purple iris blows
There lies perchance the remnant of his foes,
Now all mere dust, the dead and the dead's shame;
We who today stand here must face the same,
And to what purpose no man living knows!

Washington Pre-Eminent is introduced by a sequence of seven sonnets. The last, *L'Envoi* (page 159) closes with this message:

And let our millions their proud treasure spend
In cultivating Art's majestic song,
And to the sad of earth fair hostage send
Until sons of America shall throng
All courts of earth. And let this be our end
To heal the sick and fortify the strong!

A biographic sketch of Mrs. Bartlett, by Edwin Markham, author of the celebrated poem *The Man With The Hoe* follows the plays (pages 255-264). After reviewing her early active life and honours she received, Markham stated: But Mrs. Bartlett's widest and perhaps happiest work dates from the creation of the American Section of *The Poetry Review* of England. This extension of the English *Review*, backed by the Poetry Society of Great Britain, has been a fine intermediary among poetry lovers of both continents. It has made many friends on each side of the estranging sea. . . . For Mrs. Bartlett's important and far-reaching work of establishing poetry on an international basis and for her introduction of science as material of poetry, she has been awarded the Gold Medal of The Poetry Society of Great Britain.

Markham reminds us of the literary bridging of the Atlantic that resulted from Mrs. Bartlett's association with The Poetry Society and *The Poetry Review* by this account of the poetry contests (page 258): But especially has she evoked attention to contemporary poets and poetry, by the poetic contests she has instituted. She has organized and carried on triumphantly some twenty of these international poetry tournaments, with substantial prizes, and with authoritative judges, on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus she has called attention to the poetry of today in every English-speaking country. In this fine activity she stands alone.

HENRY WOODHOUSE.

Mr. Henry Woodhouse, the author of this review (a life member and vice-president of The Poetry Society who has contributed several articles to *The Poetry Review* in the past) will be especially remembered by the members of the Poetry Society and readers of the *Review* who visited the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940, for the courtesies he extended to them in the Shakespeare House, the Globe Theatre, the Dickens House, and Sulgrave Manor, which he had equipped from his magnificent collections of period furniture and furnishings, paintings, rare etchings, engravings, historic manuscripts, rare editions of works of famous poets and authors, and priceless memorabilia.

We also find evidence of Mr. Woodhouse's special qualification for reviewing the historic plays of the American Editor of *Poetry Review*, Mrs. Alice Hunt Bartlett, in the editorial note to an article Mr. Woodhouse wrote for the *Musical Leader* which stated "Mr. Woodhouse, the president of the Historic Arts Association and Historic Celebrations Association, is owner of the world's largest private collection of opera and theatrical historic records".

Elegy for a Finch

THIS piteous daub of dark and bright
Is relic of a voice, a wing
That leapt in effluence of light,
That the new day impelled to sing.

Because the wheel of death came down,
A thicket murmured in its sleep,
A young star shivered and was gone,
A tree of May began to weep.

O, grievously the small deaths lie
On earth's deep heart, but lightly bear
Upon the thought of man, whose eye
Perceives no lovely terror there,

Who has not felt within his mind
The soft incipient wing unclose,
Nor in a radiant hour designed
The first foreshadowing of the rose.

Careless he slays, not knowing how
His deed is written on the skies.
In heaven, with dim, averted brow,
His angel sighs, his angel sighs.

Rachael Bates.

*After Nuremburg**

IF justice has been done, then hate not still
Hans, Otto, Wilhelm—call him what you will,
Who with a mass tenacity held out
From street to street, and in the last redoubt;
Who, in his witless, but his loyal way,
Worshipped the idol with the feet of clay,
And who now stares, like a bewildered clown
To see that pinchbeck God come crashing down,
While all the dragons' teeth he sowed, arise
Livid against the menace of the skies.
Is Hans not punished, who will taste for years
Sour on his tongue the blood and bitter tears
Of the last battle ground, in which were seen
Volkstrum of sixty, lads of seventeen?
Sirs, from the stock that Hitler brought to shame,
Beethoven, Bach and Schiller also came,
And if some gloating sadists of the pen
Make Fritz world's whipping boy,—not so the men
Who met the fighting German face to face,
And recognise his courage—and disgrace.

Vivien Bulkley.

Shakespearian Emendations—No. 4

As You Like It, Act 1, Scene 3, opens thus (Rosalind being on a couch with her face to the wall).

Celia : Why cousin, why Rosalind—Cupid have mercy ! Not a word ?

Rosalind : Not one to throw at a dog.

Celia : No, thy words are too precious to be cast away upon curs, throw some of them at me ; come, lame me with reasons.

Rosalind : Then there were two cousins laid up, when the one should be lamed with reasons, and the other *mad* without any.

Celia : But is all this for your father ?

Rosalind : No, some of it is for my child's father——(she rises).

Long ago Furness said " Is this word (mad) quite above suspicion ?" But he seems to have left it at that, and, apparently, the word was, from then, fully accepted until 1926, when the " New Cambridge" suggested it might be a substitute for "mauled", because "some expression is needed to balance 'lamed'." I agree the necessity, but would remark that "lamed with reasons" is a very different thing to "lamed with stones", hence, either "mad" or "mauled" not merely "balances" lamed, but excessively *over*-balances it.

As Celia appealed to Cupid and slyly asked "Is all this for your father ?" it is obvious that she had surmised that Rosalind was hopelessly in love with Orlando, and that she started the conversation in order to cheer her up, therefore, it cannot be entertained that she used the word "lame" seriously, or other than, in order to turn Rosalind's doggy metaphor to further her own friendly design.

The object of this passage is to prove that Shakespeare did not write "mad" but "sad". If a person goes mad, the usual result is that he is not "laid-up" but, on the contrary, that his activity is abnormally increased, to an extent that is axiomatic, e.g. "He went like mad" ; "Mad as a March hare". Moreover, though Rosalind, in view of her high spirits, might occasionally have been twitted with being a madbrain before she met Orlando, the present scene, when he was monopolizing her thoughts, was the very moment at which such epithet would have been most inappropriate.

The "New Cambridge" suggestion that Rosalind was on a couch with her face to the wall when the scene opened, is a good one, for it explains her phrase "laid-up", and its further direction, that she rose after her allusion to her "child's father", is excellent, for it shows that, being neither mad nor mauled, she was sensible enough, after first stating there was no reason for her moping, to admit her love for Orlando, and sufficiently resolute not to let it continue to control her thoughts or diminish her activity.

The repartee, following Rosalind's introduction of the metaphorical dog, can be paraphrased as follows :

Celia : Your words are precious stones, any one of which is too valuable to be thrown at a cur ; throw some of them at me, until they stop my questions by a satisfactory explanation of your unusual silence.

Rosalind : Then we should both be silenced ; you by reasons and myself for no reason whatsoever.

Celia asked to be lamed, meaning silenced, and Rosalind replied that she would then be "laid-up", therefore, by "laid-up", she meant "silenced" ; therefore, by "sad" she meant "silent", and that cannot be considered a misuse of the term, sadness and silence being constant companions, and in the present case, it was a happy adaptation, for up till then they had (we may assume) always been prattling, so would have to be truly sad before they would be silent.

As Rosalind might have stopped the dog's career with stones, so she might stop the career of Celia's questioning with reasons ; both would then be "laid-up", that is, put out of action. These explanations prove "mad" is utterly out of place in their play upon words. Further, a few lines on, Celia refers to it as "jests". As regards "mad" no-one would suppose either damsel was out of her mind, or that Rosalind would have accused herself of being in that state, the more especially as, a few minutes later, she said "and in my heart lie there what woman's fear there will"; thus showing her to be essentially feminine and sane, whereas entire absence of fear is a concomitant of madness : and it would be equally absurd to think Rosalind was either "laid-up" or "lamed", for, later in the same scene she said she would have 'a swashing and martial outside', and thereupon strutted a few paces, which proved that she meant it ; and it was not she, but Celia, who wearied of walking in the forest.

I submit to have proved Shakespeare wrote "sad" and that "mad" is a First Folio error.

In Act 1, Scene 3, Duke Frederick banishes his niece Rosalind, whereupon Celia asks him also to banish her herself, for, she says, "I cannot live out of her company" to which he replies "You are a fool" and leaves the room. Then Celia turns to her cousin and says

> O my poor Rosalind, whither wilt thou go ?
> Wilt thou *change* fathers ? I will give thee mine.
> I *charge* thee, be not more grieved than I am.

And a few lines on

> Therefore devise with me how we may fly,
> Whither to go and what to bear with us,
> And do not seek to *take your change* upon you,
> To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out ;

In the First Folio it is "take your change" and in the Second Folio "take your charge". Charles Knight accepts "charge" and says it is a Second Folio "correction". The Cambridge prints "change" and says "Some follow Second Folio and read 'your charge'." The Warwick uses "change" and says "charge" would hardly apply to Rosalind's sentence. Other editions print "change" without comment, and no doubt some print "charge", ignoring the First Folio. Thus, Folios and editors seem to be all in mutual disagreement. We need not consider the first three lines above quoted, further than to note the curious coincidence that they contain the two words about which there is the said divergence of opinion.

As usual, the doubtful word ("change" or "charge") should be considered in connection with its context. I submit that Shakespeare wrote "take your *chance*" and in so doing, made use of a phrase current three hundred years before his time and in use ever since. "Chance" is far more apposite than "change" in this case, for though Rosalind's circumstances were certainly changed very much for the worse, "change" does not give a hint of the perils she was called upon to face, of which she said a few lines on.

> Alas, what danger will it be to us,
> Maids as we are, to travel forth so far !
> Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.

The phrase appears in "King John" (1, 1, 151) where the Bastard says "Brother, take you my land, I'll take my chance." If the Bastard, a youthful warrior, whose services had just been asked for by Queen Elinor, had "to take his chance", poor Rosalind, suddenly banished and knowing not where to turn for help or

where to go, was indeed called upon to "take her chance"! In Cymbeline (IV, 2, 382) we have "Wilt thou take thy chance with me?", the first two words of which merely turn the phrase into a question; omitting them leaves "take thy chance with me" and that is the intent of Celia's "And do not seek to take your chance upon you——and leave me out."

Act 2, Scene 1, starts with a speech by the deposed duke to his faithful adherents, who are all living, as best they can, in the forest of Arden. As printed in the First Folio, it is as follows:

> Now my Coe-mates, and brothers in exile:
> Hath not old custome made this life more sweete
> Then that of painted pompe? Are not these woods
> More free from perill then the enuious Court?
> Heere feele we not the penaltie of Adam,
> The Seasons difference, as the Icie phange
> And churlish chiding of the winters winde,
> Which when it bites and blowes upon my body
> Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
> This is no flattery: these are counsellors
> That feelingly perswade me what I am:
> Sweet are the uses of adversitie
> Which like the toad, ougly and venemous,
> Weares yet a precious Iewell in his head:
> And this our life exempt from publike haunt,
> Findes tongues in trees, bookes in running brookes,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything.

The object of the speech is to keep up the spirits of his followers, who, in loyalty to him, are cheerfully enduring hard times as outlaws.

The Warwick says Theobald's correction of 200 years ago ("Here feel we *but* the penalty of Adam") "seems absolutely necessary", and the Cambridge, that he has been followed "by all modern editors", but I cannot join the throng, for, if "but" means "only" there were many other things they felt, such as a restricted diet, absence of comforts, etc. If Theobald's reading was "Here feel we (as a hardship) only the seasons' change", the reply is that it was no hardship, for the duke smiled at it. If he meant "we feel merely the penalty of Adam" then he was minimising the rigour of winter, whereas Shakespeare insists on the severity of that season, for he refers to winter's icy fang *biting the body*.

The Cambridge has accepted Professor Grierson's idea, that the duke made a question of "Here feel we not the penalty of Adam, the seasons' difference?" and that the Folio compositor omitted the mark of interrogation, but differs from the view it ascribes to him, that the duke was "complaining of the penalty of Adam". It considers that the duke feels the said penalty "as one of the greatest boons of sylvan life". Thus, these two authorities are diametrically opposed in the matter, and I submit both are wrong. The duke cannot be *complaining* of the thing he *smiles* at. The Cambridge phrase "one of the greatest boons of sylvan life", implies that such existence was enjoyable and had many boons attached to it, but such was not the case, for the wind makes the duke shrink with cold; they were living in "adversity"; were "enduring shrewd days and nights"; had "seen better days" (2.7.120), and were in reality unhappy for the duke said to his lords (2.7.137) "Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy", meaning there were others as badly off as themselves. Nor can I accept the Folio's "Here *feel we not* the penalty of Adam, the seasons' difference", for later in

the speech the duke says he feels the winter's wind very much and that the icy fang and churlish chiding of the wind "feelingly (through my feelings) persuade me what I am." Further, the burden of Amiens' song (later in the same Act) "Here shall he see no enemy but winter and rough weather", confirms that they did feel the discomforts of winter ; in fact, according to this song, it was the only drawback to a life in the wild. I am confident my emendation will settle all differences ; it is to change "feele" to "feare" and then the six following lines (further emended, see on) will suitably explain why the duke, although owning no proper shelter, did not dread hard weather.

The finish of the speech "And this our life—finds—good in everything" is the culmination of all preceding. The speaker gave in advance a few examples to support the declaration with which he intended to finish, viz. that he and his court were better off in every way than they were before their exile, because things, which, till then, were considered harmful or detrimental in any way, were now seen to have good points. The speech might well have inspired Voltaire's "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds", for that is the gist of it, yet, on analysis, it is seen to be unconvincing. It started with two questions, leaving his lords to supply their own answers. Then came the comparison of the trials of winter to unwelcome truths offered by trustworthy counsellors, and his lords could have found little comfort in that. Next, he gave three examples of the sweets of adversity, but they are reducible to two, for the sermons would be received through the medium of either tongues or books, and that is all the evidence provided of the "good in everything". It appears the duke himself was dubious of the power of the speech, for he appended "*I* would not change it", in order to draw a chorus of approval from his followers, and as it failed to do so, he quickly stopped further comment, after Amiens' had spoken,by changing the subject with "Come, shall we go kill us venison ?"

In the Folio "I would not change it" forms the start of Amiens' remarks. The words are usually credited to the duke nowadays and the Cambridge says Dyce first restored them to him, but according to Cowden Clarke "Upton should have the credit" and as his "Observations on Shakespeare" was published in 1746, and Dyce was not born till 1798, Upton must receive the award. I agree with him, for if "I would not change it" are retained for Amiens, it contradicts the rest of what he said. As corrected, the passage reads as follows :

Duke : I would not change it.
Amiens : Happy is your grace
That can translate the stubbornness of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a style.

As Amiens considered it lucky ("happy") that the duke could bear the hardships ("stubbornness of fortune") so resignedly, it is clear the speaker was not equally fortunate, so would have welcomed an opportunity of returning home.

By changing three letters, turning a comma into a full-stop, and adding a pair of brackets, all the critics' problems regarding the duke's speech are solved. These alterations have been underlined below :

Here *fear* we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference. *At* the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
(Which, when it bites and blows upon my body—
Even till I shrink with cold), I smile, and say
"This is no flattery——"

and I offer the emendations with every confidence that (save for the brackets)

they restore the lines to the state in which they left the poet's pen. Either "which" or "when it" appears redundant as to sense, but necessary for metre: removing the former, the parenthesis could read

(E'en when it bites and blows upon my body,
Until I shrink with cold) I smile, and say

which should prove acceptable, for it then agrees with the context, preserves metre, introduces no new word and improves rhythm. In the plays, "even" is frequently reduced to one syllable to preserve rhythm, as I have done above. In any case, the second line should read as above, for "even till" is a syllable too long and over-emphatic : if the wind is biting and blowing on the body, one would expect the body to shrink with cold quickly, instead of its having to sustain the ordeal for a prolonged period (as is to be inferred by "even till") before the shrinking commences. During the numerous transcriptions of the play prior to the Folio, Shakespeare's "Until" could have easily been read as "E'en till" ; could have been in that form on the copy used for the Folio and the type-setter have inserted the "v". The two sounds "Until" and "E'en till" are so much alike that it was unusually easy for the one to be heard as the other.

Johnson says Shakespeare is supposed to have ridiculed alliteration in M.N.D. but that in the sonnet of Holofernes he makes great use of it. He could have given a more striking example of its use by mentioning the duke's speech, where in addition to six ordinary alliterations, there are two triple specimens—"bites and blows upon my body" and "shrink with cold, I smile, and say" ; none of which are in the finest part of the speech ("Sweet are the uses of adversity" and the two following lines), which fact is food for thought.

HOWARD PARSONS.

SHAKESPEARE'S COLLABORATOR

When over a hundred years ago a searcher looked in the Episcopal Register of Worcester in Bishop Whitgift's day, there was found an entry under the date November 27th, 1582, a licence, recorded as granted, sanctioning the marriage of William Shakespear and Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton, which is a parish some seven miles west of Stratford-upon-Avon. No detective work seems to have been done on the lady, who turns out to have been a nun of the Order of St. Clare, who resided in the early Tudor period manor of Hillborough, "Haunted Hillborough". Readers of Spenser's *AMORETTI* perhaps have wondered at the sonnet LVIII, which is the only one that carries a superscription—"*By her that is most assured to her selfe*". But no one seems to have noticed a peculiarly typical case of Elizabethan anagram, for the first six initial letters of the verse reads WITHAL, which also means the nun's name WHATLI, a variation of the spelling Whateley, Whatley or Whatli. It has been obvious for a long time that a female hand worked at the *AMORETTI*, especially in the sonnet II, where in the fourth line we read "*Till greater than my wombe thou woxen art*", a truly female phrase. It now appears that the nun wrote many poems under her initials A.W. but oftener under *Ignoto* and *Anomos*. One of the decicatory sonnets of the *Faerie Queen* is signed *Ignoto*, and another one referring to a man who wore woman's garments is signed W.L. which is thought to be simply W(hat) L(i), or Whatli again. In *A Lover's Complaint* it is thought that verse 34 refers to A.W. as it reads: "*Lo ! this device was sent me from a nun, or sister sanctified, of holiest note*", and in verse 38 appears: "*My parts had power to charm a sacred nun*". Of course, the nun and W.S. never did get married, as

William, then a mere boy, had to marry under compulsion a farm girl who could neither read nor write, Anne Hathaway.

Heaven alone knows what the nun underwent in worry and shame, and William must have been absolutely numbed and frustrated to the Nth. As the new Archbishop of Canterbury of 1583 was the former Bishop Whitgift of Worcester under whom the aforementioned nun plus Shakespeare were granted a marriage licence, the nun had to live as a concealed poetess, so she used well known writers such as Spenser and the others, with their permission and full knowledge. Many A. W. *Ignoto and Anomos* poems appeared in Francis Davison's *POETICAL RHAPSODY* of 1602, and the edition of 1890, edited by A. H. Bullen, quotes from the Harleian MS 280, f. 102, etc., a long list of poem first lines by the nun, some 140. Davison says the verse was written almost twenty years previously, so that he takes us back to the period when she and her immortal William were thwarted in their marriage by the farmgirl's condition. Christopher Marlowe wrote a three sonnet-like stanza poem to *IGNOTO*, who is a woman, and ends up with the words: "*But by the chaps of hell, to do thee good, I'll freely spend my thrice decocted blood*". Perhaps this letter will start off other readers of Elizabethan literature on the detective hunt, which should prove as exciting as any of Sherlock Holmes. Judging from Shakespeare's "*The Phoenix and the Turtle*" (the nun was the Phoenix, the female). The Sister of the Order of St. Clare died around 1600, as W. S., printed his verses in 1601. Then what about Ben Jonson's "*The Phoenix Analysed*", is that not all about the Phoenix Anne Whatli, or Whateley? I certainly think so.

Milngavie, Glasgow. W. Hutcheson, C.E.

THE BATHE, AN ECSTACY.

Had your reviewer merely said he did not care for *The Bathe* I would have said nothing, but when he says that "the theme is too humdrum" I boil over. "Humdrum"! He must be thinking of the front at Brighton while I was describing the glory of solitary grandeur on cliffs by an azure sea. Clearly your reviewer can never have bathed in perfection; how different is the subtly understanding of Mr. Walter de la Mare, a real poet, who says of my poem—

> "I read it with admiration and delight. Water, air, atmosphere, colour—the whole poem is a unity of all its parts, with its lovely solitude and fascinating detail, and not least the nuggets of scientific exactitude here and there. Choicest of all its sections for me, perhaps, are X/XII—with that delicious butterfly; but the whole poem is full of life and beauty".

Norbury Park. Marie C. Stopes.

Our Own Anthology

A FINAL APPEAL

The Appeal at page 140 of the March-April issue has only produced half the required response. I want at least another hundred lists of your hundred favourite poems before submitting the 'winning' list to the Council of the Society for publication, writes Mr. Christmas Humphreys.

Please note the rules. No poem must be more than 200 lines in length, and extracts are barred unless inset as a poem within a larger poem. Put the poets' names in alphabetical order on the left side of the page, and the poems opposite. Give names of poems whenever possible, not first lines.

The closing date is definitely August 31st, so get busy if you wish to be a co-editor of the Poetry Society's orginal venture. Our Own Anthology.

THE POETIC MIND

Great writers of every period in our modern history have recognised a clear distinction between prose and poetry. In his "Apologie for Poetrie", Sidney raises poetry to the level of philosophy, claiming that the poet is vates or prophet and the possessor of the divine fire. Truly, Sidney makes no exorbitant claim, for though he has more heart than head, more spirit than reason, the poet comes at his meaning by brilliance of intuition, oftentimes prophesying events many generations before their incidence in time. Tennyson and Blake both forecast events of the present age in "Locksley Hall" and "America". Aerial bombardment and American aid to democracy were clearly foretold in these two poems.

Philosophy tries to place man in his true position in relation to his environment. Its method is rational: dealing logically in realities. Poetry deals primarily with less rational material, though even poetry must have reason in order to be true poetry. It must, in fact, have a comprehensible meaning. Its main appeal, however, is to the imagination, through the building up of pictures which speak to our visual, oral or other sensuous imaginations. It is necessary for a poet to have a philosophy, though not a dogmatically fixed set of ideas. He should be able to add to this and enlarge, as well as expand, his more static ideas. These ideas are usually expressed in language appealing to the imagination, before they pass for review to the understanding.

Poetry is indeed a part of philosophy. It is as though philosophy were a house, a house of life, and poetry, one view of that house. Science and religion would then be other prospects. Poetry is, as it were, one facet of all knowledge and the light reflected from it, "the light that never was on sea or land."

Shelley's claim for poetry is perhaps the highest in our literature, for he says that it is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge. It certainly is one aspect of Nature and of the nature of things. If then poetry is an aspect of the nature of things, and the poet thinks it the fittest way of considering life, what is the state of his mind? Shakespeare said,

> "The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact,
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
> That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing,
> A local habitation and a name."

Shakespeare, with a fine simplicity, says, in effect, that imagination is inspired and heightened in the poet so that he sees into the heart of things and makes what he sees live forever in fine language.

Every poet must know his own mind or he cannot express clearly what he sees in it—visions of beauty in nature which he sees through his eyes and interprets with his mind; visions of beauty, too, in human nature, though in his prophetic function, he can see the human dross mingled with the essential divinity. He builds new worlds with old materials, taking what he senses in his surroundings and making new syntheses in the heat of his imagination.

For imagination is like a fire which moulds as it apprehends, so that the better trained the imagination, the better the poetry emerging into language. For the

poet is primarily a worker in language, which is to him, what paint and canvas are to the painter or notes and musical instruments to the musician. Imagination is the common factor in all three types of art.

Those visions which dance between the eye and brain, behind the veil of the mental temple, in the sacred penetralia of the imagination, are the intangible *dramatis personae* which the poet brings into the light of everyday life for he must give them "a local habitation and a name". It is when these fret the poet's mind that he is taken with a "divine discontent", making himself a source of annoyance to any who try to hinder his concentration upon the task of releasing his visions from their narrow cell. His mental state is analogous to birth-pangs in the physical realm. His amorphous visions emerge to form themselves into scenes, persons, animals, spirits, gods, or ideas of things, according to the mould he has prepared, the style he may have adopted. By the frenzy of his imagination the poet sees what other men fail to see or to imagine. He comprehends the true content of phenomena and translates them into sounding language. His mind grasps and interprets, impressing on others in indelible words and sayings, phrases and passages, the meaning and beauty of life as it appears to him.

Rugeley. ERNEST C. TOYE.

SONNETS: AND SIDNEY

(1) In the hands of a master there is little to choose between the Petrarchian and the Shakespearean types of sonnet for sonority, sweetness, intensity, or any other quality which individual taste may prefer. Many of Shakespeare's best show well the wave-like rise and fall (or fall and rise) of feeling which is often supposed to be characteristic only of the Italian type, *e.g.*, the fall and rise of No. XVIII: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* Many of the assertions made about sonnets should be taken with a grain of salt, or are wrong when tested—as the curious mistake made in the excellent book on *Modern English Metre* by J. B. Mayor, when he said that Wordsworth "never, I think, employs a final distich": whereas, in a collection of Wordsworth's sonnets I have, I have counted 107 final couplets! The final couplet effect was given in a few of Petrarch's sonnets in which he gave as sestet rhymes *c d d d c c* (as I, 73 and 133, and II, 55): this form was also occasionally given by Dante deliberately; also once, when he "intended an Ode" "it turn'd to a Sonnet" which ended with the rhymes *vede* and *crede* (*Si lungamente*—begun as a Canzone or Song, and finished as a sonnet). Many of Dante's and Petrarch's Songs end with final couplets—so they had no *a priori* distaste for this ending; though the Italian language has such an abundance of rhyming words that undoubtedly the avoidance of final couplets suits Italian type sonnets best, and (*pace* Mr. Edmund Lobo) the Premium Editor is quite entitled to prefer this form in English, as was his critic: but their restrictive choice does not out-weigh the fact that many of the best English sonnets, from Sidney onwards, end with terminal couplets.

(2) Sidney's sonnet *With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies*, said by Saintsbury to be "the first perfectly charming sonnet in the English language", has had a poor "press" in the hands of Mr. E. D. Mackerness, as has Sidney himself as a poet. Sidney is depreciated because he was neither Donne nor Shakespeare!—which is the type of criticism which assails Burns because he did not write as Byron did, or Bach for not being Beethoven! This is the third type of "perversity of criticism" which was given by Clutton-Brock in one of his essays *On Literature and Life*. Of the Elizabethans Sidney came next to Spenser and

Shakespeare: he strikes the first note in English of "intense and fresh poetry" Saintsbury), and shows sometimes a "towering soar of verse". Sidney will never appeal to some critics like Hazlitt: but in his own age, and ever since, there have been many who have appreciated his keen blend of sentiment and intelligence, and love of the Greek "beautiful-and-good", in literature, as in life, more than Mr. Mackerness appears to do. Sidney was a pioneer in many ways, as a poet, critic and novelist: Professor Feuillerat pointed out that "the study of Sir Philip as a thinker is an entirely unexplored field, and will fully reward those who undertake it"—a beginning has been made, since this was written, by Zandvoort and others; and specially in the United States Sidney, as poet and man, as thinker and type of the great Elizabethan age, has continued to be a fertile source of inspiration.

London, W.1. J. H. Douglas Webster.

"EQUILIBRIUM"

In the article entitled "Equilibrium" in your March issue, the writer's pen roves from star movements to microbes, from heart-beats to the law of indestructibility of matter, from life to death, in order to prove a theory regarding literature, of which small use is made in the summing-up. It is more a piece of political propaganda than an essay on literature, the party with a permanent perch on the fence being boosted, while those striving on either side are roundly abused. Nevertheless, it seems Liberals are unfitted for literary production, as they are not extremists?

Although Ruskin so used it, the writer would forbid the use of the word "realism" in a criticism, because of its alleged mis-use. But how many words would survive if all were subject to the same risk? "Realism" is necessary as an antonym to "idealism".

The dominant idea of the article is that in all activities of nature and man, individual units take one of two sides, modernist (or progressive) and reactionary (or *status-quo*), and that after a long struggle neither side wins, but an extremely temporary state of equality results, after which a similar contest recommences with a similar momentary result and so on, *ad infinitum*: that not the comparatively long ascendency of the one side or the other, but "that infinitesimal point of time —equilibrium", is the object of the (almost) perpetual contest, and that word therefore appears as the heading of the article. A homely illustration will suffice to prove the falsity of the doctrine:—in a tug-of-war, equilibrium is the very thing the rivals are all-out to destroy, and it is rare indeed that they do not succeed. Equilibrium exists until it is disturbed, hence, it may be of long duration. A good instance is the unruffled surface of a pond, which continues until a wind springs up.

Fluctuations are normal in unstable conditions, such as persist in weather, politics, Stock Exchange prices, etc., but I doubt whether the same applies to the arts and literature, for I am optimistic enough to consider that continual progress is made, so that the "period" will never recur; that better books are being, or will be, written than ever before, but that it will be a hundred years before it can be proved. Man is, every day, becoming more objective in his outlook, and more free from the limitation of his senses, for we now make use of the ranges beyond, can see the date on a penny a mile away, hear the queer noises made by a moth while he is dining on our clothing, and, being aware that there are sounds when the impulses producing them are fewer than eighteen, or more than 3,800 per second, although in either case they are inaudible to us, we take them into our calculations. The achievements of modern science are more god-like than human,

so why should literature stand still? In my view, it is kaleidoscopic, each generation providing a new pattern of which the odds are a million to one against a repetition.

"Equilibrium" is a disheartening doctrine, and the law of the indestructibility of matter is invoked to "re-vitalize the idea", from which it appears it was moribund before the writer had finished his article, yet that law is itself defunct, for it is asserted by the scientists concerned that the atom-bomb obtains its power by its own annihilation.

Hove. HOWARD PARSONS.

DYLAN THOMAS AS A PATTERN

The word "modern" in its application to any subject, is by its very ephemerality, misleading. In its relationship to poetry its significance is even more obscure.

It is out-moded the instant it is written. Today's fashion-plate is tomorrow's museum-piece. In their particular day Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Keats were "moderns" and were, in their own way, "revolutionaries" and "experimentalists" but their experiments and excursions in literature have stood the acid test of time. Will the same thing be said of any living "revolutionary" writer? All that we can do is to assess the known capabilities or shortcomings of such writers by a critical study and analysis of their work as we see it.

The most provocative writer today is without doubt Dylan Thomas. The word "writer" is used as distinct from the word "poet". There is too much divergence of opinion to label him a poet. Certain critcs, eminent in their sphere, hail Thomas as a genius, others, no doubt basing their criticism on the more accepted and traditional forms of poetry, assert with equal vigour that he is no poet bu simply a writer of flowery-prose.

Before one can judge impartially therefore, it is necessary to have a standard to conform to and by which his work may be measured.

If for our definition, we adhere to that laid down by Raymund Bourne in "What is Poetry" (*The Poetry Review*, August/September, 1946)—"Poetry is imaginative language in accord with truth and beauty, expressed in lines of measured and duly accented words forming a sequence of rhythmical sounds", then by and large, Dylan Thomas is no poet. If, on the other hand, our definition is more elastic and permits the writer to parade his "visions" before the reader in a mass of hyphenated-verbosity that makes the Hampton Court Maze look like a straight line, then Dylan Thomas can claim to be without peer. Indeed, on the few occasions when he achieves clarity of both observation and expression, he has proved himself capable of producing poetry of a quality rarely equalled, as in his "Poem in October", "And Death Shall Have No Dominion", Out Of the Sighs a Little Comes" and "This Bread I Break . . ."

These poems however represent a very small proportion of Thomas's output. The rest appear as the blurred portrayal of a strained mentality, which, lost in a whirlpool of surrealist visions, vainly struggles to comprehend and to interpret them.

Whether it is the complexity of his visions or his inabilty, through immaturity, to present a clearer picture of them to the reader, has yet to be proved, but a line here or a phrase there, fraught with exquisite loveliness, suggest that the "seed" of greatness is present. The development of that "seed" may have a profound effect upon the harvest of English literature. Perhaps when Dylan Thomas has learned to differentiate between substance and shadow he will add new lustre to our language. At the moment however, he is a victim of the "obscurity bug" which

attacks all forms of Art. He stands therefore in the same relationship to poetry as does Picasso to painting.

Nothing could better serve to illustrate this phase of "obscurity" than does the critical study of one of his poems which appeared in the March issue of the Strand Magazine, "A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire of a Child in London". These two dozen lines are in turn "explained" in three whole pages of questionable lucidity by William Empson, "himself" (I quote the Strand) "a 'difficult' modern poet, as well as a scholarly critic".

That a "scholarly critic" be called upon to clarify a poem of twenty-four lines in three pages is in itself sufficient justification for the allegation of "obscurity". If further evidence be needed, Mr. Empson himself is at hand with "You can enjoy one of the poems and form an opinion about it, without making up your mind on the meaning of all the details. But even so, taking it line by line, there is a good deal which I feel I haven't got to the bottom of. Obscurity in a writer may be due, not to concentration but to a refusal to speak out". "This poem" he continues, "tells us that Dylan Thomas *ISN'T* (the italics are mine) going to say something". As a further precaution, in case Empson's three page explanatory effort has not quite achieved that which it set out to do, Michael Ayrton, described as "artist friend of the poet" attempts a further elucidation of this short poem with his own artistic interpretation which is rather like an embryonic, trunkless monstrosity.

One must however, in all fairness concede that the illustration does symbolise the poem, in that both have heads (the title being the head of the poem) and both lack body.

There is a scene in the play "Now Barabbas" of the condemned cell, where one of the warders, having listened to the condemned man reciting a passage from his favourite poem, replies, "That's not poetry, I can understand that"! This quotation from a contemporary play serves as a strong indictment of the "stuff served up" as poetry by many present day writers.

The same deadly virus that attacks these poets, can claim as its victims, other literary critics beside Mr. Empson. D. S. Savage writing on "Dylan Thomas" in "Voices" states that "Faced with a poet of Dylan Thomas's ability, a fitting humility is called for in the critic". Herbert Read, too overwhelmed to praise, can only "stand and stare". Other critics see him as the arch-angel of a new Apocalypse but it is left to D. S. Savage, in the concluding strains of his Paean of Praise to allocate to Thomas a seat with the Gods—"We yet may find—that we had in our midst a poet worthy to be classed with Dante, Shakespeare or Milton".

Was it my fancy or did I hear the Spirit of the Swan of Avon invoke his Hotspur to reply—

> "I had rather be a kitten and cry mew,
> Than one of these same metre ballet-mongers;
> I had rather hear a brazen canstick turn'd
> Or a dry wheel grate on the axletree;
> And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
> Nothing so much as mincing poetry:—
> 'Tis like the forc'd gait of a shuffling nag"?

It would seem therefore, that at the moment, until Dylan Thomas gets a clearer view of his "visions", and until such time as he matures and develops, it were better he be regarded on face-value as a literary oddity.

It would indeed be a matter for regret, were he to be deemed a fit pattern for younger writers to emulate and in their interests individually and the interests of

Poetry generally, it would be better for them to adhere to clear and facile expositions of traditional themes, unless of course they are fortunate enough to number amongst their acquaintances, "scholarly critics" and "artist friends" who are ever ready to present to the harassed reading public, a clear and concise picture of the poets meaning!

Milford Haven. NOEL A. JONES.

POETRY AND JAZZ

As one who is an admirer and exponent of both poetry and jazz—which seems to be an exceptional duality, for some reason—I can, I think, dissertate somewhat upon the relative aspects of the twain. Let me state here, albeit, that the percentage of people interested in jazz falls far below that of those interested in poetry. But whereas what is known as 'poetry' (or, if you wish, as 'verse', generally) is rather clearly classifiable, the term 'jazz' has become obscured, corrupted, and implicated in lesser and unworthy tributaries of it: so that, in its rôle of origin, the word 'jazz' is commonly used when any of its tributaries are meant—and that misconception is wide, inasmuch as true jazz is in an apathetic state and its imitators and offspring very much alive, as a good and wise aged father who has bred only prosperous 'black sheep'.

To clarify then: roughly, there are four or five types of 'music'—again, generally speaking. There is classical, 'light' classical (including musical comedy usually), popular dance-music, swing and . . . . jazz. These last three are those so flagrantly regarded by many as one and indivisible and referred to under the heading of one or another—usually that of 'jazz', so that the word has become to suggest something 'low' or vulgar; that is the anomaly which I seek to remedy.

And now to poetry: definitions are legion, but closely allied, so that we can at least assert that poetry is a rhythmic creation which, though knowing some sort of rules regarding its formation, concedes to none within their wide confines, i.e., providing that it *has* a recognized formation, uses the correct and the flowing words, conveys some meaning to someone . . . *and* is inspired, we can safely regard it as poetry. The very first thing is inspiration, the possession of a mind which receives the urge to create *and* is capable of shutting itself away from all else and becoming 'blank,' that is, receptive and responsive only to the incoming sensations which are to be recorded and shaped into poetic form. Without that essential, the production—however poetically contrived—can rarely 'scan' in the first place; with that essential, there is comparatively little to be done—or, it *is* done, within that condition. As a tributary of this pure poetry we have a jargon which tends to obtain prominence in the name of the former although being a corruption of it to the extent of complete disassociation from its precepts.

Now to transpose: for poetry there is jazz; for the jargon (so-called 'modern', or what you will, school) there is 'swing'; and we might say for the ancient classical poetry there is the classical form of music. Some may resent this comparison of abstracts, may deny existence of such; nevertheless, I am a firm believer in the affinity of things, and can only attempt to prove my belief by attempting to prove that there is indeed a state of conformity in the nature of all being, whencesoever it comes.

Reverting again to the musical theme: popular dance-music is a mass-produced commercialized necessity, a necessity, that is, for the masses, the average person: it *is* that person's *music*, in most cases. It is printed in bars and dots and what-not and is played as it appears, or, as it is interpolated for the players—orchestrated. These orchestrations are standard, the performers all interpret the same music

perhaps with a slight digression here and there: or certain high-ups in the business contrive their own particular orchestrations, varying in a little degree, and these in their turn usually become standard also. So, broadly speaking, we have mass-produced sound, with the broadcasters of it all executing it in the same manner, except in the matter of degree of ability.

In the first place, in order to rule out any suggestion of inspiration, the speed with which these things become obsolete and dead and forgotten, must be sufficient judgment. Thence to 'swing': this is 'modern', ultra-executed pep.D.M. *or* jazz itself, again orchestrated, but-oh-ever-so-slickly, and likewise standardly performed in all its weird contortions, verse-libre, undoubtedly.

What is jazz? (what is poetry?). Jazz is, or was, the mode of self expression—the poetry—of the transplanted, tormented, bewailing negro of the southern states of the U.S.A. which became adopted—because of its yearning appeal—by 'whites' who enjoyed proximity to these outcasts. Outcasts always form—again in the nature of things—certain peculiar cults, fashions, modes of expressions of their lives. This outflow—even when very crude—is undoubtedly inspired: inspired by the same privations and abuses showered upon the poor outcast and slave; the greater the suffering, the greater the inspiration. So came the music of New Orleans, of St. Louis, of Basin Streets and Beale Streets, of simple derivations. So it came by word of trumpet, trombone, banjo, tinkling piano—and not otherwise recorded, but yet recorded for all time, as the present time acknowledges in its perpetuation of it yet. There are still some who perform it—incidentally, until recently, one of the most admirable programmes of the B.B.C. was its 'Radio Rhythm Club,' which was, in effect, a jazz club, and the perpetuation of original jazz in these programmes was commendable. The prodigal usurpers of it, the dance and swing bands, are so much disassociated from it that they do not entertain or possess such necessary components as the banjo (the guitar being interposed) the *jazz*-fiddle and the *jazz*-trombone. Sometimes they perforce play the classics of this jazz—indeed classics because of their survival—'St. Louis Blues', 'Darktown Strutters Ball', 'Body and Soul', 'Whispering' . . . ; but their execution bears not the hall-mark: the true performance survives in the devout groups who exult in it in the privacy of their exultation, generally.

You may ask—but how can this jazz be discerned from other forms by the uninitiated listener? I only answer—in the same way as poetry can be discerned from what is not poetry, by those capable of such discernment. So that one must be poetically-acute to discern poetry and jazz-acute to discern jazz (although poetry is loftily removed, as is jazz, from the pretence of it); which criterion probably explains why the sound of jazz has become confused in the sound of concentrated banality by those who are outside of it.

I feel that I have covered little, or inadequate, ground in my attempt to clarify the position and prestige of 'jazz,' that I have overlooked numerous details and examples; but I have written as I was prompted, and I trust a little of good may result, for the good name of Jazz. For swing is verse and jazz is poetry, and never the twain shall meet.

Romford. THOS. ASTORE.

CULTIVATE TOLERANT JUDGMENT

I would like to express my opinion about fiery disputes and arguments over good and bad verse, as to whether it is good or bad. With the incalculable variety and number of spirits and intellects among poetry readers, why not let each poem

rest with each reader, for him to gain what he may from it—for that is exactly what the honest mind will do, regardless of critical judgments or squabbles over any one person's judgment or comment. Innovators of every age have always had to stand an egging; but maybe that is why we wait so long to change for the better. Actually, it appears to me, we may be working against poetry by our diatribe. Were the universal approach to poetry one in which the reader tried to comprehend the writer—not castigate him—I believe we would harvest more richly than we now do. I believe we all concede that true poetry pricks emotion, though we may not all agree to the entire list of human emotions aroused. Anger, for instance. It is not as lovely as some other emotions; but righteous anger is a powerful maker-over of the human soul and daily physical life—and often with supremely magnificent results. Now I do not stand with those labelled obscurists, yet I do not condemn them. Because I do not, or even cannot, understand them does not prove that they have nothing to say, no contribution—even of anger—to make. The final judgment will lie with the cross-section intelligence of all men. If the stuff is drivel, time will tell. Poets that are beloved and listened to are judged, in the final analysis, by the common human heart, not the shelves of criticism; for whether the critic praise and list at the top is usually not even known by minds that read poetry for what is in it. They read it—not what someone else thinks of it. These multitudinous, secret judgments, somehow stand above the critics finally, and the poet either lives on or is forgotten. Since this matter thus automatically solves itself, why not more said about *how* to read poetry and less about labelled kinds?

A poem discarded by a million minds, however, if it carry uplifting and joy to one, has not been written in vain; and, though there are minds that can expand to take in and enjoy and digest all sorts of poems, the majority cannot do so. To me ridding the reader of the obnoxious pretense of being carried away with everything he reads is a basic step. Pretended appreciation of poetry, however widespread and loudly articulate, is only sea and sand.

Wichita, Kansas. KUNIGUNDE DUNCAN.

CHINESE POEMS AND ENGLISH TRANSLATORS

Reviewing Arthur Waley's "Chinese Poems", Christmas Humphreys puts the question, "Can an English poet translate a Chinese poem, or, for that matter, any poem?" When he added the latter part of the question I think he must have forgotten for the moment the Psalms, Te Deum and some of the German hymns, but, of course, it must be admitted that there are peculiar problems in the case of Chinese.

When I listened recently to the first and third of the broadcasts in the Third Programme on the same subject, another question came to my mind, "Can a critic who does not know Chinese express any opinion which is worth while about English translations?" Unexpectedly, perhaps, I answered both questions with a qualified affirmative.

The opinion of an English critic is valuable on the translation as a poem in its own right. He can say whether the poem creates in him the emotional response he expects from a well-wrought English poem, whether the form suits the spirit of the poem, and whether the language is felicitous.

But that is all! How far the poem represents the thought of the original Chinese; how far the emotional response is that intended by the Chinese poet, and how far the form of the poem in the translation corresponds to the Chinese form—these things he cannot know.

With Mr. Waley he is safe so far as the first point is concerned. Detailed examination of some of the poems in Mr. Waley's translation and comparison with the original, reveals only the most trivial deviations. Nor is there much to fear with regard to the emotional response—if the critic is sensitive enough, he will feel approximately what the first readers of the poems felt. On the last point, however, only the student of Chinese can say anything worth while, and he will need to walk delicately.

Mr. Waley spoke in a most interesting way of the technique of English poetry which he had employed in his translations. He has used the 'sprung rhythm' not accidentally or spasmodically as it is used in our earlier English poets, but deliberately as Gerard Manley Hopkins used it. In the broadcast Mr. Waley did not make it clear why he chose this technique but in his written introduction to "170 Chinese Poems" he says, "Each character in the Chinese is represented by a stress in English" and "I have preferred to vary the metre of my version, rather than pad out the line with unnecessary verbiage". This is good so far as it goes but when Mr. Waley quotes a clumsy doggerel translation of a Chinese poem as a proof that the formal method of translation is unsuitable, one feels that he is being unfair: can it be that he is not quite happy in his own mind about the rejection of the formal style? It is difficult to see how he can be happy about it, for he knows that the poets of the flowering period of Chinese poetry were as rigidly formal as genius in any age or clime can possibly be. It seems to me, therefore, that it is unfair to the Chinese poet to translate him into free verse as Amy Lowell did when she followed Florence Ayscough's translations, or even the style used by Mr. Waley, which he would perhaps not agree to call free verse, but which is hardly to be distinguished from it by the ordinary reader.

Some years ago in an introduction to some translations "Chinese Lyrics" by Ch'u Ta-kao, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch made some interesting and challenging observations about the technique of Chinese poetry. "Of its technique—even apart from its strait-laced forms, its parallel appeal to ear and eye (so that to the Chinese, with their ideographics, the very calligraphy counts in their esteem of a lyric, or of a distich with a flower as companion ornament of a silken scroll or a vase)—I can only say the obvious thing and hazard a guess upon it. Quite obviously our tradition of stress and rhyme will never suit the Chinese lyric, whether to translate or to copy with any conveyance of its peculiar beauty: for the two work on different planes, ours accentual, the Chinese *tonal*. Yet our language in the daily speech of all classes is largely tonal; and from my guess I shall merely put as a suggestion to our younger poets, so busy just now with experiments in technical improvement, that they study the Chinese variation of tones. It will be hard, but it will do them no harm; and it may not only lead ahead but backward to recapture the ancestral union of poetry with song or melodious recitation—"Sphere-born harmonious sister, Voice and Verse, which the Puritans almost dissevered when they banished Chamber Music."

This was written in 1937, and perhaps some poets have taken the hint. Ezra Pound has made something like a 'corner' in Chinesy verse such as no Chinese ever wrote but which does show what most people think Chinese verse is like. So far I have not seen any serious attempt to work out the suggestions made by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch: it would need a long discipline of Chinese study and a real interest in the technique as well as the ideas of Chinese poetry. Sir Arthur emphasised one point which I feel is most important—the connection between Chinese poetry and music. No Chinese would dream of *reading* a poem, he would chant it or sing it, probably to a lute accompaniment, and a friend of mine

made during internment in Shanghai showed me a book of his* in which he proves that Chinese music developed directly from the tonal or, as he prefers to say, the 'neumal' pattern of Chinese verse. If we could match the meaning of a Chinese poem in English words to the Chinese tune to which it should be sung, I believe we should gain a clearer understanding of Chinese poetry and might also throw light on our problems of English prosody.

For the purposes of poetry the Chinese disregard all the variations in tone except the basic differentiations of p'ing' and 'che' (level and oblique, flat and deflected). Mr. Waley has pointed out 'the deflected' tones are distinctly more emphatic, and so have a faint analogy to our stressed syllables." But when we compare the tonal pattern of a poem with the music to which it is set we find that generally the tendency is to rise from 'p'ing' to 'che' or when one 'p'ing' follows another, and to fall when going from 'che' to 'p'ing' or when 'ches' are successive.

This should help in transferring the pattern of Chinese poetry into English. Abercrombie, however, says what I think is true, 'It seems usual in English for increase of stress to heighten the pitch.' Thus in proceeding from stress to unstress the pitch falls (pi-ty); from unstress to stress the pitch rises (avail)." Whether the apparent discrepancy between Mr. Waley's statement and the usage of the Chinese musicians is a real one or not I find it hard to say.

In this article I do not attempt to show exactly how the pattern of Chinese verse can be reproduced in English, but I do believe that if it is to be done at all it will be upon the lines I have suggested. Other elements will have to be examined also—the T'ang lyric is heavily rhymed, the same rhyme being used four times in an eight lined stanza, and the use of parallelism is very general, too; both these have often resulted in doggerel when used by inferior poets, but in the hands of the masters have conveyed a true inspiration of beauty.

The Chinese poet loved the restrictions and disciplines of the form he accepted just as a long and honourable succession of English poets have loved the sonnet, even though they have longed to find,

"Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of Poesy."

Those who would reveal adequately to the English public the beauties of Chinese poetry must be prepared to accept its disciplines whilst pursuing Keats' quest.

Leicester, April 25. A. P. HADWEN.

[Mr. Hadwen has many qualifications and much justification for contributing the above communication. He has spent most of his time in China since 1925 as a missionary and has always been interested in the literature of China, although it was not until 1941 when the Japanese enforced the interruption of his missionary work that he was able to give much time to the study of Chinese classical poetry, and then there were naturally hindrances in obtaining the necessary literature. He had, however, already translated some 60 original Chinese Christian hymns into English verse and had acquired some knowledge of Chinese verse in that way. He has been a member of The Poetry Society for many years with only a break during the war. We believe with him that a study of Chinese prosody along the lines suggested would fertilise our English poetry much as it was fertilised from French and Italian contacts in earlier centuries.—ED.]

* *Chinese Musical Art* by J. H. Levis (published Henri Vetch, Peking, but now out of print).

The Premium Editor's Report

THE difficulty of criticising the prevailing shortcomings of your entries is not merely that I am compelled to some repetition but mainly that the writing of poetry is so much more a matter of character than of intellect. The physcho-analyst might, therefore, be more useful than the critic of poetry in assisting you; and I beg to be acquitted in saying this of any desire to suggest that you are not all perfectly balanced people. The fact is, of course, that in all creative work the spiritual qualities perform the primary function and for the creation of poetry there needs to be a certain special balance of all the constituent powers or weaknesses within us which yet permits a preponderating value to some and inflicts a subordinate role upon others. Clearly if this be the case a critic is on a bad wicket except where he is dealing only with misconceptions or errors of understanding which have diverted the poet into wrong courses as by a certain wilfulness or contumacy.

Silk purses cannot be made from sow's ears, however critical one may become of the texture of that porcine appendage; indeed the writer was once advised by the late John Davidson, who was asked to criticise some of his poems, to write no more but to do something else, a counsel which he followed faithfully for almost a life-time. But I am less exigent than John Davidson and I will ask none of you to do this. Rather I will persevere in my difficult task, content with whatever small success may attend the possibly vain repetition to which I am driven.

My text on this occasion might well be the words "Sentiment and Sentimentality". Constantly I adjure you to feel your poems emotionally,—to engender a pressure of feeling for your theme before you attempt to express it poetically. Some of my readers interpret that advice into a sentimentality which by the excess which distinguishes that rather fervid thing robs their work of all conviction. Sentimentality is to sentiment almost what gush is to sincerity, and in the expression of emotion restraint is infinitely more moving than tears, austerity richer than pomp. And that is precisely where we come up against this matter of character, and at the risk of being fatally discouraging to some of you it is necessary to say that to become poets you must add that cubit to your stature which Holy Writ so doubts your ability to compass. It is not, however, impossible, since faith may move mountains and here is not so great a matter.

Sentimentality in my experience is the product of too facile a reaction to an emotional stimulus, in other words to a sort of spiritual laziness which shirks the anguish of being moved too deeply, of really trying for complete emotional realisation of the significances of human life. Many of us have a habit of living superficially, presenting a blandly acceptable front to all the occasions of our lives, but allowing its events to flow over us like water off a duck's back. But a poet must throw wide his arms and welcome the arrows of outrageous fortune, must seek emotional disturbance, welcoming the pang for the mysteries that it will reveal to him and without regard to his own easy comfort in a short and hazardous life. The more he does that the less will the emotional words gush from his pen but the more vigorously will restraint barb them and the fewer of them will he need to convey to us the true poignancy of his own emotional reactions.

In this present competition there were, I think, fewer prosodic faults,—a matter which rejoiced me because a sense of form is not nearly so superficial a thing as some would suppose. In the making of a poet that sense is of the greatest importance. We are conditioned to rhythms. The beating of our hearts, the regularity of our breathing are rhythms which control even the working of the mind, both in its power of comprehension and its capacity to create. It might be fashionable to

refer in an atomic age to the inviolable rhythms of the neutrons and electrons of which we are composed but certainly we are creatures who without those rhythms would fly asunder and disappear without trace. It has always seemed to me that this fact underlies the obstinate survival of the old classic forms which I believe were never consciously invented by any one but were and are the natural rhythms of expression to man when he is possessed by an emotional force. A sense of form of this kind is, therefore, fundamental, and the degree of unconsciousness with which we use it is neither here nor there. To reach, as near as humanity may, perfection in rhythmical expression should therefore be the aim of all of us, for beneath that impact the emotions of your readers will inevitably be stirred to a greater sensitivity and a deeper comprehension. We all know poems whose rhythms have a deep inevitability which knocks at the heart, poems which it is no trouble to memorise, which in fact repeat themselves effortlessly upon our tongue. How much of this power lies in form and how much in other things? The answer is, I think, that this tremendous rhythmical power is the authentic and unstudied idiom of true inspiration and that they cannot be separated. For the rest, the entry was large as befits the Spring season and consequently, though not inevitably, there are longer lists of Highly Commended and Commended names than usual. This is as I would have it. I am gratified also by the many letters appreciative of my advice and opinion which contributors saw fit to send me with their new entries.

The Premium is awarded to MARY PEARSON, of Herne Hill, S.W., whose long poem of some 350 lines called "The Divine Illusion" is so well sustained that it overbore all challengers. Its length prevents its publication here but those who are interested may look for it in our next number.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Wilfred H. Bartlett, Calverleigh;
Thetis Blacker, Shamley Green;
Rev. H. S. Box, Haywards Heath;
Beryl Davies, Gilwern;
Ida S. Groom, Montevideo;
Jean Kenward, Chorley Wood;
D. Freeman Larkin, Hove;
M. J. Stevens, Bath;
Neill Wells, Dublin.

COMMENDED:

Catherine Blakiston, Milford;
John Blanford, Worthing;
Raymond Bourne, Thetford;
Helen Shackleton Brietzcke, Harrow;
T. E. Casson, Pennington;
Alan Dain, Reigate;
Hermione Dewar, Uckfield;
Elizabeth Fancett, Stanmore;
Catherine Forbes, Fulham;
R. Scott Frayn, Northwood;
Greenwood Haynes, Caterham;
Jessie B. Heard, Bristol, 7.
Phoebe Hesketh, Rivington;
Carla Lanyon Lanyon, Farnham;
Hamish N. Law, Nairn;
D. Lord, Oxford;
Dr. J. C. Lyth, Barnes;
Phyllis Lyth, Barnes;
Agnes Foley Macdonald, Halifax,N.S.
Capt. R. H. D. Machair, B.A.O.R.
Braie Mills, Walton-on-Thames;
James C. Milne, Arbroath;
G. H. Moore,Richmond;
W. H. D. Morgan, Redhill;
M. Paterson, Hatch End;
Irene Pawsey, Oxford;
Nancy Pollock, Tettenhall;
Celia Randall, Holywood, Co. Down;
Morag Renwick, Northam-on-Tweed;
Arthur Lynford Smith, Wanstead;
Margery Smith, Nottingham;
J. F. Smytheman, Auckland, N.Z.;
G. A. Squires, Haddiscoe;
A. M. Stokes, Linby;
Stanley Stokes, Exeter;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe;
G. Tolley, Old Hill;
M. Trench, Bracknell;
Gladys Ward, St. John's Wood, N.W.